

חמש
 מגילות



The
Metsudah
Five Megillos

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**The
Metsudah
Five Megillos**

רות Ruth

שיר השירים Shir Hashirim

קהלת Koheles

איכה Eichah

אסתר Esther

**Translated and Annotated
by Rabbi Avrohom Davis**

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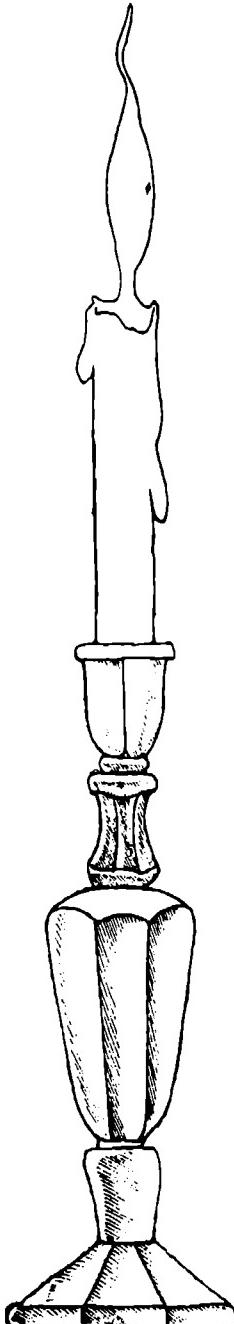
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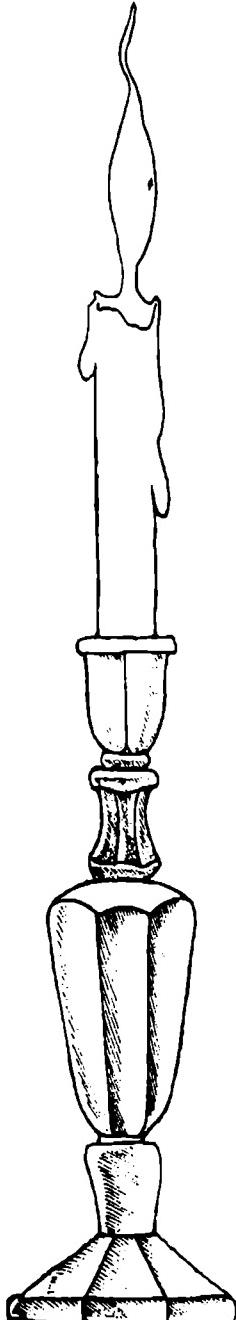
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our loving grandparents
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Preface to Ruth

The Book of Ruth is read on Shavuos. Several reasons have been suggested for this. *Avudraham*, the famous fourteenth-century Spanish authority on the liturgy, is the source of two basic reasons, namely, that the barley harvest which is the background to the story makes it appropriate for the harvest festival of Shavuos, and also that Ruth's conversion to Judaism is an appropriate parallel to the Festival which itself celebrates Israel's acceptance of the Torah through a process of ritual conversion.

The *Midrash* [Yalkut Shimoni] observes that the trials and tribulations of Naomi and Ruth leading up to Ruth's conversion and acceptance of her lot within the Jewish community illustrates the thought 'that the Torah is not won without suffering and poverty.' Rav Zeira remarked (*Midrash Rabbah*, Ruth 2:15) that the book contains no laws of the pure or impure, no forbidden or permitted matter. Why was it then written? To teach us how great is the reward of those who bestow kindness on others. For we see that the foundation of Jewish monarchy with the birth of King David was the direct outgrowth of **רֵדָה** kindness, which was the prominent characteristic of both Ruth and Boaz, the ancestors of David. Thus there is a similarity between Megillas Ruth and the Torah which is replete with laws based on lovingkindness. Always intent on the minutest point of interest, the Rabbis have observed that the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word **רֵדָה** is 606 which, with the seven Noachide laws, add up to 613, the sum total of the mitzvos in the Torah.

In addition to the above, there are those who show the connection of this book to Shavuos through the relationship of Ruth, the ancestress of King David. For tradition has it that King David was born and died on Shavuos.

It is clear that the wealth of reasons submitted to justify the reading of the Book of Ruth on Shavuos are all valid and serve as a loving tribute to the inspiring story it tells.

רות Ruth

פרק א Chapter I

1. And it happened
in the days when the Judges judged,¹
that there was a famine in the land,
and a man² of Bethlehem in Judah went
to sojourn³ in the fields of Moab⁴;
he with his wife and two sons.
2. The man's name was Elimelech,
his wife's name was Naomi,⁵
the name[s] of his two sons,
were Machlon and Kilyon,
Ephrathites⁶ from Bethlehem in Judah;
they came to the Moabite country
and remained there.⁷
3. Elimelech, Naomi's husband died,⁸
and she was left with her two sons.
- א. וַיְהִי בִּימֵי שֻׁפֶּט הַשָּׁפָטִים וַיְהִי רָעֵב בָּאָרֶץ וַיָּלֹךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לִחְם יְהוָה לְגֹר בְּשָׂרֵי מוֹאָב הַזֹּא וְאַשְׁתָּו וְשָׁנֵי בָנָיו:
ב. וַיָּמָת הָאִישׁ אֶלְימֶלֶךְ וַיָּמָת אֶשְׁתָּו נָעָמִי וַיָּמָת שָׁנֵי בָנָיו מַחְלוֹן וְכָלִיּוֹן אֲפָרָתִים מִבֵּית לִחְם יְהוָה נִכְּבָא שָׂרֵי מוֹאָב וַיַּהַי־שָׁם:
ג. וַיָּמָת אֶלְימֶלֶךְ אִישׁ נָעָמִי וַתִּשְׁאַר הָיא וְשָׁנֵי בָנָיה:

¹ There are various views in the Midrash regarding the exact date of this narrative. The Talmud (Mesechet Baba Bathra 91a) states in the name of Rav that the story of Ruth occurred before the reign of King Saul, when the Jews were ruled by Judges, and specifically at the time of Ivtzan, the successor to Yistach (see Judges 12:8). The Sages identify Ivtzan as Boaz, a central figure in Megillas Ruth.

² The word אִישׁ denotes an important person, as the *Targum* translates, "Gavra Rabbah" a great man. Elimelech was certainly of importance as a man of great wealth.

³ The reasons for his leaving were his meanness and selfishness. He was afraid that the hungry people would come to him for help—*Rashi*. Nevertheless there is one redeeming feature, because he set out merely to *sojourn* temporarily until the famine was over, and not with the intention of settling there permanently.

⁴ Elimelech's sin was compounded by his going to Moab. Had he gone to another land, his sin would not have been so great, for Moab was detested by God, as Scripture relates, "No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter into the congregation of Adonoy—forever" (Deuteronomy 23:4). It says also, "You shall not seek their peace or their well-being all your days forever" (Deuteronomy 23:7).—*Iggeres Shmuel*

⁵ Naomi means pleasant or sweet. Her name typified her deeds, which were pleasant.

⁶ They came from Ephrath, which was the original name for Bethlehem (see Genesis 35:19, 48:7). According to the *Targum* the word מִרְקָבָה, is translated as masters, (רְגָנִין).

⁷ Although they had intended to sojourn there temporarily (see note 3), they decided to remain in permanent residence.—*Malbim*

⁸ Not from old age or sickness, but as the result of Divine punishment for leaving the Holy Land and remaining in Moab.

4. They married Moabite women,⁹
one of whom was named Orpah,
and the name of the second Ruth,¹⁰
and they lived there about ten years.¹¹
5. They both died;
Machlon and Kilyon,
the woman was bereft of her two sons
and of her husband.
6. She then arose with her daughters-in-law,¹²
in order to return from the fields of Moab
for she had heard in the fields of Moab
that Adonoy had cared for His people¹³
to give them food.
7. She left the place
where she had been,
accompanied by her two daughters-in-law,
and they took the road
to return to the land of Judah.
8. Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law,
“Go, return,
each of you to her mother’s home;
may Adonoy deal kindly with you
as you have dealt with the dead¹⁴
and with me.¹⁵
- ד. וַיֵּשׁוּגּוּ לְבָם נְשִׁים מִאֱבוֹזֶת
שֵׁם הַאֲמָח עַרְפָּה
וְשֵׁם הַשְׁנִית רִוְתָּה
וַיֵּשְׁכַּבְּ שֵׁם בָּעֵלֶר שְׁנִים:
ה. וַיַּמְחוּ גַּם-שְׁנִיהם
מְחֻלָּן וְכָלְיוֹן
וְתַשְׁאֵל הָאֲשָׁה מִשְׁנִי יְלָקִים
וּמְאִישָׁה:
ו. וַתָּקַם הִיא וְכָלְתִּיקָּה
וַתַּשְׁבַּב מִשְׁנִי מוֹאָב
בִּשְׁמַעְרָה בְּשָׂרָה מוֹאָב
כִּי-פָקַד יְהוָה אֶת-עַמּוֹ
לְתֹתֵת לְהָם לְחָם:
ז. וַתַּפְצַא מִן-הַמִּקְוּם
אֲשֶׁר הִנְתַּחַדְשָׁה
וְשִׁטְבִּי בְּלָתִיקָה עַמּוֹ
וְמַלְכָנָה בְּדָרֶךָ
לְשֹׁוב אֶל-אֶרֶץ יְהוָה:
ח. וַתֹּאמֶר גַּעֲמִיל לְשִׁטְבִּי בְּלָתִיקָה
לְכָנָה שְׁבָנָה
אֲשֶׁר לְבֵית אַפְּתָח
יָעַשׂ יְהוָה עַפְכָם חֶסֶד
כַּאֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתָם עִם-הַמְּתִים
עַמְּדִי:

⁹ The sons sinned even more grievously in taking Moabite wives. It should be noted that only after their father’s death did the sons marry women who were not of their faith. Most probably, Elimelech would not have tolerated such action.—*Alshich*

¹⁰ According to tradition, Ruth and Orpah were the daughters of Eglon, King of Moab (see *Mesechet Sanhedrin* 105b).

¹¹ This confirms the view that they had given up all thought of returning to the land of Israel.—*Malbim*

¹² The resolve to leave their ill-fated domicile was equally shared by them all, because in their minds their evil fortune was bound up with their present luckless abode.—*Malbim*

¹³ She heard this from the Jewish travellers and peddlers who had brought merchandise to sell in Moab.—*Midrash*

¹⁴ By concerning yourselves with their burial (shrouds etc.) and by not remarrying.—*Midrash-Targum*

¹⁵ By renouncing the marriage settlement which you could have legally claimed and by caring for my basic necessities.—*Midrash-Targum*

9. May Adonoy grant you
that you may find [security] rest
each in the home of her [new] husband";
she kissed them
and they wept aloud.

10. And they said to her,
"We will return with you to your people."¹⁶

11. And Naomi said,
"Turn back my daughters,
why should you come with me?
Am I likely to have more sons in my womb,
that they may be your husbands?

12. "Turn back, my daughters, go [your way],
for I am too old to have a husband.
Even if I could say: 'I have yet hope,'
even if I were to have a husband tonight—
and even if I were to bear sons—

13. Would you wait for them
until they were grown to manhood?
Would you shut yourselves in for them,
denying yourselves to marry another?—
No, my daughters,
my distress is great on your account,¹⁷
for against me is directed
the hand of Adonoy."

14. They wept loudly again,
Orpah kissed her mother-in-law,¹⁸

ט. יְתִן יְהוָה לְכֶם
וּמְצָאָנָךְ מִנוֹתָה
אֲשֶׁר בֵּית אִישׁ
וְתַשְׁקַׁלְתֶּן
וְתַשְׁעַנָּה קֹלֶן וְתַבְכִּינָה:
. וְתַאֲמְרָה-לָהּ
כִּי-אַתְּךְ נִשְׁזַׁבְתְּ עַמְּךָ:
יא. וְתַאֲמַר נָעֲמֵל
שְׁבָנָה בְּנָתִי
לְפָה תַּלְכָּנָה עַמִּי
הַעֲדָלִי בְּנִים בְּמָעֵי
וְהִיו לְכֶם לְאָנָשִׁים:
יב. שְׁבָנָה בְּנָתִי לְכָנָן
כִּי נַגְנַתִּי מְהִינָּה לְאִישׁ
כִּי אַמְرָתִי יִשְׁלָלִי תְּקֹנָה
גַּם הִיִּתִי הַלְּיָלָה לְאִישׁ
וְגַם יַלְּדָתִי בְּנִים:
יג. הַלְּגָן | פְּשָׁבְרָנָה
עד אֲשֶׁר יַגְּדֵלוּ
הַלְּהָן מַעֲגָנָה
לְבָלָתִי הַרְוָתִי לְאִישׁ
אֶל בְּנָתִי
כִּי-מְרַלִּי מָאוֹד מִכֶּם
כִּי-יִצְחָא בְּיִד-יְהוָה:
יד. וְתַשְׁעַנָּה קֹלֶן וְתַבְכִּינָה עוֹד
וְתַשְׁקַׁעַרְפָּה לְחַמּוֹתָה

¹⁶ From this declaration, Naomi understood that their desire was only to settle among the Jews but not to accept their religion by converting.—*Malbin*

According to *Alshich*, however, she understood them to convey a strong desire to convert, and accept the God of Israel.

¹⁷ Because when I see your bereavement, I am reminded that my sons died a tragic death because of you.

¹⁸ Scripture reveals no more of their parting—no words of farewell—only the kiss. Orpah was one of the tragic figures who needed but a little more resolution at the critical moment, and for lack of it, shut themselves out from the covenant and sank back to a world of idolatry and immorality.

but Ruth did cling to her.

וְרוּתִי דָּקַקָּה בָּהּ
טו. וְתָאָמֵר

15. And she [Naomi] said to her,
“See, your sister-in-law has gone back
to her people and to her god;¹⁹
return along with your sister-in-law.”

הָגָה שֶׁבֶה יַבְמֹתָה
אֲלֻעָםָה וְאֲלַאַלְהָהָה
שָׁנוּכִי אַחֲרִי יַבְמֹתָהּ:
טו. וְתָאָמֵר רֹותִי

16. But Ruth said,
“Do not urge me to desert you,
to turn away from you.
For wherever you go, I shall go,
where you lodge, I will lodge,
your people are my people,
and your God, is my God.

אֲלַתְּפִגְעַי-בִּי לְעֹזֶבֶת
לְשִׁיבָה מַאֲתִירִיךְ
כִּי אֲלַאַשְׁר תַּלְכִּי אַלְךְ
וּבְאַשְׁר תַּלְנִי אַלְיןְ
עַמְּךָ עַמְּךָ
גָּאַלְהָיְךָ אַלְהָיְךָ:

17. Where you die, I will die
and there I shall be buried;

וְשָׁם אַקְבָּר
כִּי יַעֲשֶׂה יְהֹוָה לִי וְכֹה יוֹסֵף
כִּי הַפּוּנָה יַפְרִיד בֵּינוֹנָה:

so may Adonoy do to me—and even more—
if anything but death separate me from you.”

יְה. וְתָרָא
כִּי-מִתְּחַמֵּצָת הִיא לְלַכֵּחַ אַתְּהָ
וּמִתְּחַלֵּל לְדִבְרֵר אַלְיָהָה:

18. [And when] she saw
that she was determined to go with her,
she refrained from further discussion with her.

יט. וְתָלַכְנָה שְׁמִתְיָהָם

19. So the two of them went on²⁰
until they came to Bethlehem;
and on their arrival in Bethlehem
the whole city was astir on their account,²¹
and the women remarked,
“Is this [really] Naomi.”²²

עַד-בּוֹאָנָה בָּיִת לְחָם
וַיְהִי כָּבֹאָנָה בָּיִת לְחָם
וְתָהָם בְּלַהֲעִיר עַלְיָהָן
וְתָאָמְרָנָה
הַזֹּאת גַּעֲמָה:

כ. וְתָאָמֵר אַלְיָהָן

¹⁹ This would seem to indicate that she had renounced her previous intention to convert.

²⁰ Ruth's determination was so strong that she is ranked equally with Naomi, and despite leaving her home and family, she went with the same strength of soul and purpose as Naomi.—*Rashi*

²¹ Although the text makes it clear that the commotion was due to the arrival of Naomi, the Aggadah says that the wife of Boaz was being buried that very day and the city had gathered to attend her funeral.

²² The shock and surprise was elicited by the tragic reversal of fortune that struck the eye with such force. Here was an old woman, weary and worn, with every mark of sorrow and suffering. Could this be the wealthy lady of past glory they had known a decade ago.—*Midrash*

"Do not call me Naomi [sweet or pleasant]
but call me Mara [embittered one],
for most bitterly has God dealt with me.

אל-תקראנָה לֵי נָעָמִי
קְבָאַן לֵי מָרָא
כִּי-הָמָר שָׁנָי לֵי קָאָד:
כֹּא. אֲגִילָּה הַלְּכָתִי
וְרִיחַם הַשִּׁיבְנִי יְלָה
לִפְנֵה חָקְרָאָנָה לֵי נָעָמִי
וַיְלָה עָנָה בֵּי
וְשָׂקֵי
הַרְעָלִי:
כֹּב. וְתַשְׁבַּב נָעָמִי
וְרוֹת הַמוֹאֲבִיה
כָּלְתָה עָמָה
הַשְׁבָּה
מְשֻׁרִי מֹאָב
וְהַמָּה בָּאוּ בֵּית לְחֶם
בְּחַחְלָתָ קָצֵיר שָׁעָרִים:

21. I had gone forth full²³
but Adonoy has brought me back, empty²⁴;
why call me Naomi,
when Adonoy has testified against me²⁵
and the Almighty [has brought]
catastrophe upon me?"

22. Thus did Naomi return,
and Ruth, the Moabitess,
her daughter-in-law, with her,
they who had returned—
from the fields of Moab
and they arrived in Bethlehem
at the start of the barley harvest.

פרק ב

<p>1. And unto Naomi there was a kinsman on her husband's side, a man of power and substance, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz.²⁶</p> <p>2. Ruth, the Moabitess, said to Naomi, "Let me go now to the field and glean among the stalks, behind one</p>	<p>א. וְלֹנְעָמִי מָזְנָע לְאִישָׁה אִישׁ גָּבוֹר תִּל מְפַשְׁתָחָת אַלְימָלָה וְשָׁמָו בְּעוֹז: ב. וְתָאָמַר רֹות הַמוֹאֲבִיה אַל-נָעָמִי אַלְכָה-זָא נְשָׁרָה וְאַלְקָטָה בְּשָׁבְלִים אַחֲרָה</p>
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²³ With an abundance of wealth, blessed with a husband and family.

²⁴ Widowed and childless, lonely and poor.

²⁵ The Almighty has testified that I have sinned.—*Rashi*

²⁶ The Talmud suggests that Elimelech, Salmon, (the father of Boaz), Peloni-Almoni, (the anonymous relative mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4) and Naomi's father were all sons of Nachshon ben Aminadav. Thus Boaz was a cousin to Naomi (see *Mesechet Bava Bathra* 91a).

in whose eyes I will find favor";
and she said, "Go, my daughter." אֲשֶׁר אִמְצָא־תַּחַן בְּעֵינָיו
וַיֹּאמֶר לְהָלֶכֶת בְּתִי:
ג. וַיַּלְךְ וַיְקַבֵּץ
וַיַּלְקַט בְּשָׂדָה
אַחֲרֵי הַקָּצְרִים
וַיָּקַר מַקְרָב
חַלְקַת הַשְׂדָה
לְבָעוֹן
אֲשֶׁר מִמְשְׁפָחָת אֱלֹהִים:
ד. וְהִגְהָה־בָּעֵז בָּא מִבְּית לְחָם
וַיֹּאמֶר לְקֹצְרִים
יְלֻזֵּה עַמְקָם
וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יָבֹרֶךְ יְהוָה:
ה. וַיֹּאמֶר בַּעַז לְנַעֲרוֹן
הַגָּאָב עַל־הַקֹּצְרִים
לְקִי תַּגְעַרְתָּה הַזֹּאת:
ו. וַיָּעַן הַגְּעַר
הַגָּאָב עַל־הַקֹּצְרִים
וַיֹּאמֶר
גַּעֲרָה מוֹאָכִיהָ הִיא
הַשְׁבָּה עִם־גַּעַם
מִשְׁנֵי מוֹאָב:
ז. וַיֹּאמֶר
אַל־קָטְתָה־גַּעַם
אַסְפְּתִי בְּעָמְלִים
אַחֲרֵי הַקֹּצְרִים
וַיְקַבֵּץ וַיַּתְעַמֵּד
מִאָנוּ כְּבָקָר וְעַד־עֲתָה

3. So she went, and came
and gleaned in the field,
behind the harvesters;
[and as Divine fate decreed] she happened
upon that parcel of land
belonging to Boaz,
who was of the family of Elimelech.
4. Behold Boaz arrived from Bethlehem²⁷
and he said to the harvesters,
"Adonoy be with you."
and they responded, "Adonoy bless you."
5. Boaz said to his attendant,
who was in charge of the harvesters,
"to whom does this maiden belong?"²⁸
6. And the attendant answered—
he who was in charge of the harvesters—
and he said,
"She is a Moabite girl,
who returned with Naomi
from the fields of Moab."
7. And she did say,
"Please allow me to glean
and gather among the sheaves,
behind the harvesters";
so she came and has remained
from early morning until now

²⁷ He returned to his fields following the mourning period for his wife (see Chapter 1:19 and notes thereto).

²⁸ The interest of Boaz was aroused by her intelligent and modest behavior. She would only pick up the ears of grain when two of them fell from the reapers' hands but not if three fell, as the Halacha prescribes.—*Mishna Peah* 6:5. Moreover, She never stooped over immodestly to take the gleanings, but would gather them either standing or squatting.—*Midrash*

staying at home only a short time.”

8. Then Boaz said to Ruth,

“Listen well, my daughter,
do not go to glean in another field,
and do not go away from here,²⁹
but keep close to my maidens.³⁰

9. Keep your eyes on the field
where they are harvesting, and follow them.

I have ordered the lads

not to disturb you;

and when you are thirsty, go to the jugs
and drink from [the water]

which the lads have drawn.”

10. She then fell on her face,
prostrating herself on the ground,
and said to him,

“Why have I found favor in your eyes,
that you should take notice of me,
though I am a foreigner?”

11. Boaz answered³¹ and said to her,

“It has been fully reported to me
all that you have done for your mother-in-law
since your husband’s death,
how you left your father and mother

and the land of your birth,

and went to a people

you had never known before.

12. May Adonoy reward your deed,
may you be given full recompense

זה שבתת הַגִּיאָה מְאַטָּה:

ח. וְאֶמְרָל בֵּעוֹ אַלְרוֹת

הַלְאָ שְׁמַעַת בְּפִי

אַלְתַּלְכֵל לְלַקְטֵ בְּשָׂדָה אַחֲרֵ

וְגַם לֹא מַעֲבֹרִי מִזָּה

וְכֹה תַּדְקַרְנֵן עַמְּנֻעָרָתִי:

ט. עִינְיוֹנֵךְ בְּשָׂדָה

אַשְׁרִיּוֹתָן וְהַלְכָתָן אֶתְהַנְּעָרִים

הַלְוֹא אַיִתִי אֶתְהַנְּעָרִים

לְבָלְתִּי נְגַעַךְ

וְאַמְתַּח וְהַלְכָה אֶלְהַפְּלִיִּים

וְשְׁתִּיחַ

מְאַשֵּׁר יְשַׁאֲבוּן הַגְּעָרִים:

וְתַּפְלֵל עַל־פְּנֵיכָה

וְתַּשְׁתַּחַז אַרְצָה

וְתַּאֲמֵר אֱלֹהִים

מְדוֹעַל מְצָאתִי חָן בְּעִינֵיכְךָ

לְהַכִּירָנִי

וְאַנְכִּי נְכִירָה:

יָא. וַיַּעַן בֵּעוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לְהָ

הָגָד הַגָּד לִי

כָּל אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂית אֶת־חַמּוֹתָךְ

אֲחַנִּי מָות אִישָׁךְ

וְתַּעֲזִבְךָ אֶבְיךָ וְאֶפְיךָ

וְאֶרְץ מַולְתָּךְ

וְתַּלְכֵל אַלְעָם

אֲשֶׁר לְאִינּוּת חִמּוֹל שְׁלִשּׁוֹם:

יָב. יְשַׁלֵּם יְלֻנָּה פָּעָלָךְ

וְתַּהֲיֵ מְשִׁכְרָתָךְ שְׁלָמָה

²⁹ Here Boaz indicates that she shouldn’t even glean in one of his other fields.—Malbim

³⁰ These were maidens who followed behind the harvesters and bound the sheaves.

³¹ The word צָעַן usually indicates raising the voice. Boaz spoke for all to hear. He wanted everyone to know of Ruth’s noble deeds and dedication to Naomi.

from Adonoy, God of Israel,
for you have come to seek refuge
under His wings [protection]."

מעם יהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל
אֲשֶׁר-בָּאת לְחַסּוֹת
פָּתַח-קָנְפִיּוֹ:

13. Then she said,
"I have found favor in your eyes, my lord,
for you have comforted me,
and have spoken
to the heart of your handmaid,
though I cannot even be considered
as one of your handmaidens."

יְגַדֵּל תְּמָמָנוּ
אַמְצָא-תִּן בָּעִינִיךְ אֶדְנִי
כִּי נִמְמָתָנִי
וְכִי דָּבָרֶת
עַל-לִבְבִּי שְׁפָחָתָךְ
וְאַנְכִּי לֹא אָזְהָה
כְּאַתְּ שְׁפָחָתָךְ:
ד. וַיֹּאמֶר לְהָבֵעַ לְעַת הָאָכֵל
גְּשֵׁי הַלְּמָטָה וְאַכְלָתָ מִן-הַלְּחָם
וְטַבְלָתָ פְּתַח בְּחַמְץ
וְתַשְׁבַּבְלָ מִצְרָאָרִים
וַיַּצְפְּטַלְלֵה קָלִי
וַתַּאֲכַל וַתְּשַׁבַּע
וַתִּתְרַא:

14. And Boaz said to her at mealtime,
"Come here and partake of the meal,"³²
and dip your bread in the vinegar."³³
But she sat besides the harvesters,³⁴
and he handed her some roasted grain;
she ate and was satisfied,
and left some over.

טו. וַתַּקְרַב לְלִקְטָת
וַיֵּצֵא בְּעֵזֶר אֶת-נְגֻרָיו לְאָמֹר
גַּם בֵּין הַעֲמָרִים תְּלִקְטָת
וְלֹא מְכַלְּמָה:

15. And when she arose to glean,
Boaz ordered his lads, saying,
"Let her glean even among the sheaves,"³⁵
and do not humiliate her."³⁶

טו. וְגַם שְׁלִתְתָּלוּ לְהָ
מִן-הַאֲכָתִים
וְעַזְבָּתָם וְלִקְטָתָה
וְלֹא חַגְעָרוּ-בָהּ:

16. And also let [some sheaves] fall for her³⁷
even from the bundles,

טו. וְגַם שְׁלִתְתָּלוּ לְהָ
מִן-הַאֲכָתִים
וְעַזְבָּתָם וְלִקְטָתָה
וְלֹא חַגְעָרוּ-בָהּ:

and leave them for her to glean,
and do not rebuke her.

ו. וְתַלְקַט בְּשָׂדָה עַד-הַעֲרָבָה

17. So she gleaned in the field 'till evening

ו. וְתַלְקַט בְּשָׂדָה עַד-הַעֲרָבָה

³² She had modestly taken a seat at the foot of the table and he invited her to sit with him at the head of the table.—*Malbim*

³³ Vinegar or sour wine in hot weather is particularly beneficial to allay thirst, and to cool the body. It is a popular, refreshing beverage for those who toil in extremely hot climates.

³⁴ She modestly declined the honor of sitting at the head of the table.—*Ashrich*

³⁵ Boaz instructed them to let her glean even among the sheaves which the poor are not legally entitled to.

³⁶ By telling her that she is not entitled to glean from the sheaves.

³⁷ Let them fall for her, in a manner that will permit her to gather them before anyone else.

and she milled that which she gleaned,
and produced about an ephah of barley.³⁸

18. She carried it and went into the city.

Her mother-in-law saw
what she had gleaned,

and she took it out [to show her]
and she gave her what she had left over
after eating her fill.³⁹

19. Her mother-in-law said to her,

"Where did you glean today,
and where did you work?

Blessed be he that took note of you."

So she told her mother-in-law
about whom she had been working with,
and she said,

"The name of the man
with whom I worked today, is Boaz."

20. And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law,
"Blessed be he of Adonoy,
Who has not abandoned His kindness
with the living and with the dead."

And Naomi said to her,

"The man is related to us,
he is one of our [near] kinsmen."⁴⁰

21. And Ruth the Moabitess said,⁴¹

"What is more, he said to me:

ונתְחַפֵּט אֶת אֲשֶׁר־לִקְרָטה

וַיְהִי כְּאִפָּה שֻׁעָרִים:

יח. וְתַשְׁאַ וְתַבּוֹא הַעִיר

וְתַרְא חַמּוֹתָה

אֶת אֲשֶׁר־לִקְרָטה

וְתַזְאַ

וְתַחַנְלֵה אֶת אֲשֶׁר־הַתְּרָה

מִשְׁבֻעָה:

יט. וְתַאֲמַר לְהַחְמָתָה

אִיָּלָה לְקַטְתָתָה יֹם

וְאֵנוֹ עֲשֵׂית

יְגִי מִפְרָך בָּרוּךְ

וְתַגְדֵל חַמּוֹתָה

אֶת אֲשֶׁר־עִשְׁתָה עַמּוֹ

וְתַאֲמַר

שֵׁם הָאִישׁ

אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂיתִי עַמּוֹ הַיּוֹם בַּעֲזָן:

כ. וְתַאֲמַר נְעָמֵל לְכַלְתָה

בָּרוּךְ הוּא לִיְהָה

אֲשֶׁר לְאַזְכֵב חַסְדוֹ

אֶת־הַתְּהִימָתִים וְאֶת־הַמְתָתִים

וְתַאֲמַר לְהַנְעָמֵל

קָרוֹב לְנוּהָאִישׁ

מְגַאֲלָנוּ הָוֹא:

כא. וְתַאֲמַר רְוַת נְמוֹאָכִיה

בָּם | קִידְאָמָר אַלְיִ

³⁸ An *ephah* equals ten *omers*. One *omer* is sufficient for a day's food for a person. See Exodus 16:16 regarding the *Mannah* which provided an *omer* for each person. An *ephah* was thus a very substantial amount.

³⁹ From the meal given her by Boaz.

⁴⁰ The literal translation of נָגֵל, is, one of our redeemers. A נָגֵל had both rights and duties. He had the right of buying or redeeming the property which his impoverished kin was forced to sell. It was also his duty to redeem his relative who sold himself as a slave because of poverty.

⁴¹ She is referred to here as a Moabitess to indicate that she had not strictly followed Boaz' advice. He told her to stay close to his maidens, while she said "to my lads."—*Midrash*

עַם־הָנְצָלִים אֲשֶׁר־לִי תְּדַבֵּר
עַד אַסְכָּלוֹן
אָתָּה כָּל־הַקָּצָר אֲשֶׁר־לִי:
כְּבָ. וַתֹּאמֶר נָעָמִי אֶל־רוּת בְּלִתָּה
טֻוב גָּתָי
כִּי חָזָאי עַם־גָּנוּרוֹתִיו
וְלֹא יִפְגַּע־בָּךְ
בְּשַׂרְךָ אַחֲרָה:
כְּגָ. וַתַּדְבֵּק בְּגַעֲרוֹת בְּעֵז
לְלִקְלָט
עַד־קָלִות קָצִיר־הַשְׁעִיר
יִקְצִיר הַחֲטִים
וַתַּשְׁבַּ
אַתְּ-תְּמֹתָה:

'Stay close to my lads
until they have finished
all my harvesting.'"

22. Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, Ruth,
"It is best for you, my daughter,
that you go forth with his maidens,
so that they will not encounter you
in a different field."⁴²

23. So she kept close to the maidens of Boaz,
to glean [with them]
until the end of the barley harvest
and of the wheat harvest,
and she [continued] to live
with her mother-in-law.

Chapter III פרק ג

1. Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her,⁴³
"My daughter, I shall seek security for you,⁴⁴
which will be good for you.⁴⁵

2. Now, Boaz, our kinsman,
with whose maidens you have been,
behold, he will be winnowing the barley
on the threshing floor, tonight.

3. Bathe and scent yourself,
dress yourself in your finest garb,

א. וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ נָעָמִי תְּמֹתָה
בְּאָלִי הַלָּא אַבְקַשׁ־לָךְ מִנּוּחָ
אֲשֶׁר יִתְבְּלַחָה:
ב. וְעַפְתָּה הַלָּא בְּעֵז מִדְעָמָדָנָה
אֲשֶׁר בְּנִית אֶת־גָּנוּרוֹתִיו
הַגָּה־הָוֹא זָהָה
אַתְּ-גָּרְן הַשְׁעִירִים הַלִּילָה:
ג. וְרִחְצָתָה | נְסָכָת
וְשִׁמְתָּ שְׁמִלְתִּיךְ עַלְיכָךְ

⁴² It would be considered a courtesy if they would meet you in another's field after taking their favors and hospitality.

⁴³ Now that the harvest was over and Boaz had not yet indicated a desire to marry Ruth, Naomi decided to bring matters to a head. She was moved by her desire that Ruth find a home befitting her worth and character.

⁴⁴ A woman has no security until she marries. As Ruth had no mother to guide her, Naomi considered it to be her obligation.

⁴⁵ Not so much in the material as in the spiritual sense. Only a righteous, God-fearing husband, with a genuine understanding of human nature, and the quality of kindness and generosity, is able to bring spiritual happiness to his wife. These qualities were abundant in Boaz.

and go down to the threshing floor,
but do not identify yourself to the man
until he has finished eating and drinking.

ונִבְרָךְ תַּהֲגֵן
אֶל-חַנְדָעִילְאִישׁ
עַד כִּלְתוֹ לְאַכֵּל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת:

4. And when he lies down,
take note of the place
where he lies,
and go in, uncover his feet,⁴⁶
and lie down;

ד. וַיַּהַי בְּשַׁכְּבָו
וַיַּעֲתֵף אֶת-הַמְּקֹם
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב-שָׁם
וְבָאת וְגִלֵּת מִרְגְּלָתָיו
וְשַׁכְּבָתָו

He will tell you⁴⁷
what you are to do."

וְהִיא יִגְדֵּל קָגְדָּה
אֲתָה אֲשֶׁר מְעַשְׂתָּךְ:

5. She answered her,

ה. וְחִנְמָר אֱלֹהָה

"All that you say to me, I will do."

כָּל אֲשֶׁר-חִנְמָר אֱלֹהָה:

6. So she went down to the threshing-floor,⁴⁸

וַתֵּתֶן הַגְּרוּן

and did exactly
as her mother-in-law had bidden her.

וְעַט פְּכָל
אֲשֶׁר-צָנָה חַמּוֹתָה:

7. When Boaz ate and drank

ז. וְאַכֵּל בָּעוֹ וְשָׁתָּה
וַיִּיטֵּב לְפָנָיו

and his heart was jubilant,

וַיִּבְאֶל שְׁכָבָה

he went to lie down

בְּקָעָה הַעֲרָמָה

at the far end of the grain heap;

וְתַכְּבָא בְּלַט

and she came in softly,

וְתַגְלִיל מִרְגְּלָתָיו

uncovered his feet,

וְתַשְׁכַּבְתָּה:

and lay down.

ח. וַיְהִי בְּחָצֵי הַלְלָה

8. And it was at midnight,

וַיַּחֲרֹד הָאָישׁ וַיְלַפֵּת

that the man was startled and turned about—

וְהַגְּפָה

and behold—

אֲשֶׁר שְׁכַבְתָּה מִרְגְּלָתָיו:

there was a woman lying at his feet.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ When a brother refuses to be **קִבְּצָה**, to enter into a levirate marriage with his childless brother's widow, he must perform **תְּלִיּוֹת**, a ceremony which involves the removal of his shoe (Deuteronomy 25:5=10). Naomi suggested that Ruth remove his shoes to remind Boaz of his moral obligation to marry her, as the nearest of kin.—*Malbim*

⁴⁷ This word **תְּלִיּוֹת** in this phrase, has been translated *He* because it refers to God. Naomi tells Ruth that God will prompt her to speak and act properly.

⁴⁸ Only after reaching the threshing floor did she do as Naomi had told her. This saved her from the curious glances which a festively attired and perfumed woman would attract. When she reached the threshing floor, she followed Naomi's bidding and dressed herself in her best finery and scented herself with perfume.—*Rashi, Malbim*

⁴⁹ According to *Ibn Ezra*, he recognized her as a woman by her voice as she may have whispered. "Don't be afraid." He may also have distinguished her face or clothing in the light of the moon.

9. And he said, "Who are you?" ט. וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־אַתָּה

And she answered, וְאֶמְכָר

"I am Ruth, your handmaid; אֲנָכִי רֻחוֹת אֶחָתֶךָ
spread your mantle over your handmaid,⁵⁰ וְפָרַשְׁתָּךְ כַּנְפֶךְ עַל־אֶחָתֶךָ
for you are a near kinsman."⁵¹ כִּי גָּאֵל אֶתְּחָתֶךָ:

10. He then said, י. וַיֹּאמֶר

"Blessed be you of Adonoy, my daughter, בָּרוּךְתָּה אַתָּה לִיהוָה בָּתָּי
your latest act of kindness has excelled הַיְעַטְּבָתְךָ תְּסַבֵּךְ נָאָחָרָנוּ
your earlier kindness,⁵² מִזְהָרָאָשׁוֹן
since you did not go [seek] לְכַלְתִּילְכָת
after the young[er] men, אַחֲרֵי תְּבַחְנוֹנִים
whether poor or rich. אִם־צָל וְאִם־עַשְׁרִיר:

11. And now, my daughter, fear not; י.א. וְעִתָּה בְּתִי אֶל־תִּירְאִי
whatever you ask, I will do for you, כָּל אֲשֶׁר־תָּמְרִי אַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ
for it is known קַיְיָוָע
to all [who sit] in the gate⁵³ of my people, בָּל־שָׁעֵר עַמִּי
that you are a virtuous woman. כִּי אֲשֶׁת חַיְל אַתָּה:

12. Now, though it is true י.ב. וְעִתָּה כִּי אֶמְנָם
that I am a near kinsman, כִּי גָּאֵל אֲנָכִי
yet there is a kinsman וְגַם יִשְׁגַּל
who is even closer than I.⁵⁴ קָרוֹב מְאוֹבֵן:

13. Stay the night; י.ג. לִיְנֵי | הַלְּילָה
and in the morning— וְתִינְחַבְּקֵר
if he will redeem you— אִם־יִגְאַלְךָ

⁵⁰ Spread your mantle over me as a token of marriage, and then take me as your wife with a proper wedding ceremony, [chupah].—*Rashi* and others

⁵¹ It was, therefore, his legal right and duty to redeem her husband's estate (*Leviticus 25:25*). She then proceeds to ask him to acquire her, too, so that the name of the departed might be perpetuated with his property.—*Rashi*

⁵² When you abandoned your home and fortune to attach yourself to your mother-in-law. Your willingness now to marry an older man in order to perpetuate the name of your late husband is a great sacrifice on your part.—*Alshich, Ralbag*

⁵³ The gate in Biblical times, was the gathering point for those who assembled in the city. Boaz sought to reassure Ruth that the elders would not try to dissuade him from marrying a Moabite woman. They know you to be a woman of virtue.—*Malbim*

⁵⁴ He was a brother of Elimelech, whereas Boaz was only a nephew.—*Rashi*

well and good, let him redeem you,
but if he does not wish to redeem you,
then I will redeem you,
as Adonoy lives⁵⁵—
lie here until the morning.”

14. So she lay at his feet till the morning,
and she arose

before one could recognize another,
for he said,

“It must not be known

that the woman came to the threshing floor.”⁵⁶

15. And he said,

“Bring [me] the shawl you are wearing,
and hold it out.”

She held it, and he measured out
six measures of barley.

and he placed it upon her;
he then went into the city.⁵⁷

16. She came to her mother-in-law, who said,
“What happened with you, my daughter?”⁵⁸

So she told her
all that the man had done for her.

17. And she said,

“He gave me these six measures of barley.

טוב יגאל
ואם לא ייחפץ לגאלג

ונאלה תיך א נכי
היילנה

שכבי עד הבקר:

יד. ותשב מרגלותיו עד הבקר

ונתקם

בטרם יקיר איש אחיך עוז
ויאמר

אל-יונרע

כיבאה האשה תגרן:
טו. ויאמר

הרי הפטחת אשר עלייך
וACHINE-בָּה

ונתקחו בָּה וימד
שש-שעורים

וישת עלייך
ויבא הערים:

טו. ותבוא אל-חמורה ותאמר
מי-את בתי
ונתקדלה

את כל-אשר עשה לך האיש:
ז. ותאמר

שש-השעים האלה במן לי

⁵⁵ This was the Biblical form of oath. Because the concept of the Living God governed the relationship between Ruth and Boaz, they were able to meet at midnight in a lonely threshing floor and part from each other as pure as when they came.

⁵⁶ He wasn't concerned for his own reputation for he was known as a pious, old man who would not be accused of improper conduct. He was, however, very concerned about Ruth's reputation.—Alshich

According to the *Midrash*, Boaz was addressing himself to God. “All that night, Boaz was prostrate in prayer, ‘Rebono shel olam, Sovereign of the Universe, You know that I have had no physical contact with her. I pray, let it not be known that the woman came into the threshing floor so that the Name of Heaven be not profaned through me.’”

⁵⁷ He accompanied her into the city gate lest she be molested at the early hour of pre-dawn.—*Midrash*

⁵⁸ We see here Naomi's anxiety to discover how her plan had worked. According to some, the words קי אם בתי are translated: “What are you, my daughter?” Naomi asks her, “Are you still a maiden or a married woman?”

for he said to me,
 'Do not go empty-handed
 to your mother-in-law.'
 18. She then said, "Wait, my daughter,
 until you know
 what will come of the matter
 for the man will not rest
 until he settles this matter today."

כִּי אָמַר אֶלְيָהוּ
 אֲלֵל-חַבּוֹאֵי רַיִקְם
 אֲלֵל-חַמּוֹתָה:
 יְהוָה. וְהִאמְרָה שְׁבִי בְּתִי
 עַד אֲשֶׁר תַּקְעִין
 אֵיךְ יָפַל דָּבָר
 כִּי לֹא יִשְׁקַט הָאִישׁ
 כִּי אִם-כֶּלֶת הַדָּבָר הַיּוֹם:

Chapter IV

פרק ד

1. Boaz had gone up to the gate
 and was sitting there, and behold,
 the [other] redeemer was passing by—
 [the one] of whom Boaz had spoken—
 and he said [to him],
 "Come over, sit down here, *Peloni Almoni*,"⁵⁹
 and he came over and sat down.
 2. He [then] took ten men,
 of the elders of the city and said,
 "Be seated here," and they sat down.
 3. Then he said to the redeemer,
 "The parcel of land
 which belonged to our brother, Elimelech,
 is up for sale by Naomi⁶⁰
 who has returned from the Moabite country.
 4. And I decided to tell you about it,
 in these words—
 Buy it in the presence

א. וַיֵּצֵא עַלְהָה הַשְׁעָר
 וַיֵּשֶׁב שָׁמֶן וְהַגָּה
 הַגָּלָע עַבְרֵי
 אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר-בָּאָז
 וַיֹּאמֶר
 סֻוֹרָה שְׁבָדָה פְּלִינִי אַלְמָנִי
 וַיֹּסֶר וַיִּשְׁבֶּה:
 ב. וַיָּקֹחַ עַלְהָה אֲנָשִׁים
 מִזְקָנֵי הָעִיר וַיֹּאמֶר
 שְׁבָדָה וַיִּשְׁבֶּה:
 ג. וַיֹּאמֶר לְגַלְלֵי
 חַלְקַת הַשְׁדָּה
 אֲשֶׁר לְאַחֲרֵינוּ לְאַלְמָלֵךְ
 מִקְנָה נָעָמֵי
 הַשְׁבָּה מִשְׁבָּה מוֹאָב:
 ד. וְאֵין אָמָרְתִּי אָגְלָה אָזְנָעָה
 לְאַמְדָּר
 קָרְבָּה גַּנְגָּה

⁵⁹ The actual translation of the name *Peloni Almoni*, is "so and so." The person's real name was suppressed to indicate that he would not discharge his duty as a kinsman. His name was Tov (see Chapter 3:13), but his actions did not merit that he be recorded as Tov, "good."

⁶⁰ The literal meaning of *קָרְבָּה* is "has sold," but the context of the verse requires the translation to be either "intends to sell" or "is up for sale," because in fact, Naomi had not yet sold the field, as it appears from verse 5.

of those sitting here,
and in the presence
of the elders of my people.
If you desire to redeem it, redeem it,
and if it will not be redeemed,
tell me, that I may know [now],
for beside you
there is no one to redeem it,
and I am [next in line] after you.”
And he said, “I will redeem it.”⁶¹

5. Then, said Boaz,
“On the day you acquire the field
from Naomi,
and from Ruth, the Moabitess,
wife of the deceased [son],
you will have acquired it [in order]⁶²
to perpetuate the name of the deceased
upon his inheritance.”

6. So the kinsman said,
“I am unable to redeem it for myself,⁶³
for I would mar my own inheritance,⁶⁴
redeem it for yourself
and assume my right of redemption,⁶⁵
for I am unable to redeem it.”

הַשְׁבִּים
וּנְגָד
זָקֵן עֲמִי
אֶסְ-תְּגָאֵל גָּאֵל
נָגִידָה לִי (אֶדְעָה
כִּי אֵין זָוְחָק
לְגָאֹל
וְאַנְכִּי אַחֲרִיךְ
וַיֹּאמֶר אַנְכִּי אֶגְאַל:
ה. וַיֹּאמֶר בַּעֲזֹעַ
בַּיּוֹם-יָקְנוֹתָךְ הַשְׁלָה
מִיד גָּעָמִי
וּמְאֹת רַוח הַמְּוֹאָבִיה
אֲשֶׁת-הַמְּתָמָת
קָנִית
לְהַקִּים שָׁם-הַמָּתָח
עַל-נְחָלוֹת:
ו. וַיֹּאמֶר הַגָּאֵל
לֹא אָוְכֵל לְגָאֵל-לִי
פָּנָאָשְׁחִית אֶת-נְחָלוֹתִי
גָּאֵל-לְךָ אַתָּה
אַתְּ-בָּאָלָתִי
כִּי לֹא-אָוְכֵל לְגָאֵל:

⁶¹ His willingness to fulfill his obligation was due to his belief that his duty would end with the purchase of the field. When he learned that the transaction would include marriage to Ruth, he withdrew.—*Malbim*

⁶² Boaz emphasized that the main thrust of the transaction was to perpetuate the name of the deceased, the actual purchase of the field was merely a means to this end.

⁶³ He implied that bringing a second wife into his home would cause strife and was thus unwilling to marry Ruth.—*Targum*

⁶⁴ Marrying a Moabite woman would cause a taint in his family pedigree, he thought. He was unaware that the law prohibited only the male Moabite from entering the Jewish ranks, but the females were permitted.—*Midrash*

⁶⁵ The greater the selfishness of the egoist, the more generous the measure of altruism he confers upon others.—*Rav Breuer*

7. This was the former custom in Israel,⁶⁶ concerning redemption and exchange, to validate all [such] matters—a man would take off his shoe⁶⁷ and give it to the other party—

this was the form of validation in Israel.

8. So the redeemer said to Boaz,

"Acquire it for yourself,"

and so he took off his shoe.⁶⁸

9. Boaz then said to the elders

and to all the people,

"You are witnesses this day

that I have acquired

all that belonged to Elimelech,

and to [his sons], Kilyon and Machlon,

from the hand of Naomi.

10. And moreover, Ruth, the Moabitess,

the wife of Machlon,

I have taken [lit. acquired] as a wife,⁶⁹

to perpetuate the name of the deceased

upon his inheritance.⁷⁰

ז. וְזֹאת לִפְנֵים בַּיְשָׁרֶאָל
עַל-הַגָּאֵלָה וְעַל-הַקָּמִינָה
לְקִים בְּלִדְבָּר
שֶׁלְךָ אִישׁ גָּעָלוֹ
וְנִתְנַן לְבָעָהוּ
וְזֹאת הַתְּעוּדָה בַּיְשָׁרֶאָל:
ח. וַיֹּאמֶר הַגָּאֵל לְבָעָהוּ
קְנֵה-לְךָ
וַיַּשְׁלַח גָּעָלוֹ:
ט. וַיֹּאמֶר בַּעַז לְזִקְנָתִים
וְכָל-הַעֲםָן
עֲלָם אַתָּם הַזֹּם
כִּי קְנִיתִי
אַח-כָּל-אָשָׁר לְאַלְמָלָךְ
וְאַת בְּל-אָשָׁר לְכָלְיוֹן וּמְחַלּוֹן
מִין גְּעֻמִּי:
י. וְגַם אַתְּרוֹת הַמְּאַבִּיהָ
אֲשֶׁת מְחַלּוֹן
קְנִיתִי לְיִלְאָשָׁה
לְהַקִּים שְׁמַדְנָמָת
עַל-גְּנַחַתּוּ

⁶⁶ This well known *kinyan*, or form of acquisition, had been used in earlier times but for some reason had been discontinued. Boaz now, as the head of the Sanhedrin, decided to reinstate it.

⁶⁷ According to *Ibn Ezra*, a shoe was used because it was the most accessible of all articles of clothing. A shirt or other such garments could not be removed very well as it would leave the individual bare. A distinction must be made between drawing off the shoe in this instance and in that of *chalitzah*, (*Deuteronomy 25:9*).

⁶⁸ It is not clear from the text whose shoe is intended, whether that of Boaz or the kinsman. This question is discussed in *Mesechet Bava Metzia*, 47a. The halachic decision is that the *rainment* must be the buyer's (*כלpio shel lozach*) (see *Rambam, Sefer Kinyan, Hilchos Mechira*, 5:6).

⁶⁹ Boaz mentions his acquisition of Ruth separately, in order to make it clear that he does not consider the acquisition of a wife in the same manner as purchasing property. There is a great delicacy in the way in which Boaz describes his taking of Ruth as a wife. Although the same halachic terminology is used (*קְנִיתִי*), the similarity ends there and never in Jewish law is the wife regarded as anything but a beloved and respected partner in the sacred duty of building a home.

⁷⁰ The constant association of Ruth with the property of her departed husband, will cause those who see her to remark that she was the former wife of Machlon. His name is thereby kept alive in the minds of all.—*Rashi*

ולא ייפרַת שֵׁם־הָקֶת
מִעַם אֲחִיו
וּמְשֻׁעַר מִקְוֹמוֹ
עֲדָם אֶתְּנָס הַיּוֹם:
יא. וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּלֹעָם
אֲשֶׁר־בְּשֻׁעַר
(הַזְּקָנִים)
עֲדָם
יִתְּנוּ אֶת־הָאָשָׁה
הַכָּאָה אֶל־בִּתְּךָ
כְּרָתֵל | וּכְלָאָה
אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ שְׁתִּיקְתָּם
אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְעִשְׂה־חִיל בְּאֶפְרָתָה
וְקָרְא־שֵׁם בְּבֵית לְחָם:
יב. וַיָּתֵן בְּיַתְּךָ כְּבֵית פְּרָץ
אֲשֶׁר־יָלַד חֶטְמָר לְיִהוָּה
מִן־הַגְּרוּעָה
אֲשֶׁר יִתְּנוּ לְךָ
מִן־הַגְּעוּרָה הַזֹּאת:
יג. וַיַּקְרַח בֶּן־אָתְרוֹת
וְתַהְיִלוּ לְאָשָׁה
וְיָכֹא אַלְפָה
וַיְתַּמֵּן יִלְּוֹה לְהָגְרִין
וּתְלִיד בָּנָה:
יד. וְתִאמְרָנָה הַשְׁנִים אֶל־גָּעָמִי
בָּרוּךְ יִלְּוֹה
אֲשֶׁר לֹא הַשְׁבִּית לְךָ
גָּאֵל הַיּוֹם

that the name of the deceased be not cut off
from among his brethren,
and from the gate of his [native] place;
you are [hereby] witness this day."

11. And all the people said
who were at the gate,
and the elders [also] said:
"We are witnesses!
May Adonoy make this woman,
who is coming into your home,
like Rachel and like Leah,
who together built
the House of Israel.
May you perform deeds of valor in Ephrath,
and be famous in Bethlehem.

12. May your house be like the house of Peretz,
whom Tamar bore to Judah,
through the offspring
which Adonoy will give you
from this young woman."

13. So Boaz took Ruth
and she became his wife;
and he came to her.
And Adonoy made her conceive⁷¹
and she gave birth to a son.

14. And the women said to Naomi,
"Blessed is Adonoy,
Who has not withheld from you
a redeeming kinsman⁷² [even] this day;

⁷¹ It was certainly Divine Providence which enabled her to have children by the elderly Boaz although she was unable to conceive from her first husband who had been a young man.—*Malbim*

⁷² This child will redeem you from the tragedy of dying childless because he bears the soul of your son Machlon.—*Alshich*

and may his name be famous in Israel.

15. And he will be unto you a restorer of life,

and a support in your old age,

for your daughter-in-law

who loves you has borne him,

[and] she is better to you

than seven sons.

16. And Naomi took the child,

and held it in her bosom,

and she became his nurse.

17. The [woman] neighbors gave him a name,

saying, "A son has been born to Naomi,"⁷³

and they called his name, Oved⁷⁴;

he was the father of Yishai

[who was] the father of David.

18. These are the generations of Peretz:

Perets begot Hetzron;

19. and Hetzron begot Ram,

and Ram begot Aminadav;

20. and Aminadav begot Nachshon,

and Nachshon begot Salmah;

21. and Salmon begot Boaz,

and Boaz begot Oved;

22. and Oved begot Yishai;

and Yishai begot David.⁷⁵

וַיָּקֹרֶא שְׁמוֹ בִּישְׁרָאֵל:

טו. וְהִיא לֹךְ לְמַשִּׁיב נָפְשֶׁךְ

וְלֹכֶל אֶת-שִׁיבָתֶךָ

כִּי כְלָתָךְ

אֲשֶׁר-אֱהָבָת יְלַחֵד

אֲשֶׁר-יְהִיא טֻבָּה לְךָ

מִשְׁבָּעָה בְּנָים:

טו. וְתַחַת גַּעַם אֶת-הַלֵּד

וְתַשְׂתַּחַוו בְּחִיקָה

וְתַהְיִלוּ לְאָמֵנה:

יז. וְתַקְרָא בְּנָלוּ לוּ הַשְׁגָנֹות שֶׁ

לְאָמֹר יְלִדְבָּן לְעַמִּי

וְתַקְרָא בָּהּ שְׁמוֹ עֹבֶד

הַוָּא אַבְּיִישִׁי

אַבְּיִ דָדוֹ:

יח. וְאֶלְהָ חִילְדוֹת פְּרִזְ

פְּרִזְ הַוָּלִיד אֶת-חַצְרוֹן:

יט. וְחַצְרוֹן הַוָּלִיד אֶת-דְּרָם

וּנְם הַוָּלִיד אֶת-עַמִּינְכָּבָ:

כ. וְעַמִּינְכָּב הַוָּלִיד אֶת-נְחַשּׁוֹן:

ונְחַשּׁוֹן הַוָּלִיד אֶת-שְׁלָמָה:

כא. וְשְׁלָמָן הַוָּלִיד אֶת-בְּעֵזָה

וּבְעֵזָה הַוָּלִיד אֶת-עוֹבֶד:

כב. וְעֹבֶד הַוָּלִיד אֶת-יִשְׁיָהִי

וַיִּשְׁיָהִי הַוָּלִיד אֶת-דָדוֹ:

⁷³ The Talmud comments: "Was it Naomi who bore him? Surely it was Ruth who bore him!" The Talmud concludes, Ruth indeed bore him but Naomi raised him; he was therefore called her son.—(*Mesechet Sanhedrin* 19b)

⁷⁴ A proper name for one who was expected by all to serve God (עֹבֶד).

⁷⁵ Everything leads to the birth of David, and thus the whole purpose of Sefer Ruth, the Book of Ruth, is achieved in the final verse of this chapter.

Said Rabbi Eliezer, Boaz did his duty, Ruth did her part, and Naomi did hers. Now the Holy One, Blessed is He, said, "I will do what is Mine."

Preface to Shir Hashirim

Shir Hashirim, the Song of Songs, which is traditionally read in the synagogue on Shabbos Chol Hamoed Pesach, is one of the most remarkable books in the sacred Scriptures. On the face of it, it appears nothing more than an oriental love song. If that literal interpretation is accepted, there is no place for it in Holy Writ, and in fact it was not included without a controversy. It was only due to the strenuous advocacy of Rabbi Akiva that all doubts as to its propriety were dispelled. "Heaven forbid!" he said. "There could never be any doubt about the sanctity of Shir Hashirim. If the rest of the Writings are holy, then Shir Hashirim is the holy of holies." (Mishnah, Yedayim 3:5) He saw in it, the passionate yearning which subsists between God and Israel, a love which "Many waters cannot quench, neither can the rivers drown" (8:7).

Thus, Shir Hashirim is read on the Festival of Pesach as an expression of our love of God Who brought us out of bondage and took us as His beloved people. It also expresses our belief that His love for our Patriarchs was the Divine motivation for our redemption and our selection as His cherished nation.

Song of Songs

שיר השירים

Chapter I פרק א

1. The song of songs which is Shlomo's.
2. Let him kiss me
with the kisses of his mouth,¹
for your love is dearer than wine.
3. Like the fragrance of good oils,
your name is like flowing oil;²
therefore young maidens love you.³
4. Draw me, we will run after you;
the king has brought me into his chambers,
we will be glad and rejoice in you,
we recall your love more than wine,
they love you sincerely.⁴
5. I am black, but comely,⁵
daughters of Jerusalem;
like the tents of Kedar,
like the curtains of Shlomo.
6. Do not look upon me [with contempt]
that I am so black,
for the sun has tanned me;
my mother's sons were incensed against me,
they made me keeper of the vineyards,
- א. שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשָׁלֹמֶה:
ב. יְשַׁקְּנֵי מִשְׁקָוֹת פִּיהוֹ
כִּיטּוּבִים דֶּרֶיךְ מִיּוֹן:
ג. לִרְיַת שְׁמַנִּיק טֻבִּים שְׁמָן תּוֹנֵק שְׁמָךְ
עַל־כֵּן עַלְמֹות אֲהַבּוֹת:
ד. מִשְׁכְּנֵי אַחֲרִיךְ נָרוֹצָה הַכִּיאָנִי הַפְּלָלָה חֲדָרִיו נְגִילָה וְנְשִׁמְתָה בְּךָ
נְזִיפְנָה דֶּרֶיךְ מִלְיאָן מִישְׁרָם אֲהַבּוֹת:
ה. שְׁחוֹרָה אַנְיִ וְנְאֹהֶבֶת בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָם כָּאַהֲלֵי קָדְרֵי כִּירְיעָוֹת שְׁלֹמֶה:
ו. אַל־תְּرָאָנִי שָׁאָנִי שְׁתְּרָחָת שְׁשִׁזְפְּחָנִי הַשְּׁמָשָׁ בְּנִי אֲפִי גַּחֲרוֹדִי שְׁמָנִי נְטָרָה אַחֲרָכְרָמִים

¹ When God gave the Torah to Israel, He spoke to them **face to face**. That expression of Divine love is sweeter to them than any delight. Israel has been assured by Him that He will again appear to them to explain the secrets and hidden meanings of the Torah. They beseech Him to fulfill His promise and thus they exclaim, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth."

² When fragrant oil is poured, its pleasing aroma is diffused for all to enjoy.—*Rashi*

³ "Young maidens" refers to the nations of the world.—*Rashi*

⁴ Israel recalls their love of God in their youth; their following Him through the desert without preparing provisions for themselves. He brought them "into His chambers" is a reference to the *Clouds of Glory* that hovered over them in the wilderness.—*Rashi*

⁵ Israel declares to the nations of the world, "I am black because of my sinful deeds but I am comely by virtue of the good deeds of my forefathers.—*Rashi*

[but] my own vineyard I did not watch.⁶

7. Tell me, you whom my soul loves,
where do you graze your flock
where do you rest your flock at noon;
for why should I flit about
around the flocks of your companions?⁷

8. If you do not know
[you who are the] fairest of women;
go forth in the footsteps of the sheep
and pasture your kids
near the dwellings of the shepherds.⁸

9. To steeds in the chariots of Pharaoh
I have likened you, my beloved.

10. Your cheeks are comely with rows of gems
your neck with [pearl] necklaces.

11. Circlets of gold we will make for you
with spangles of silver.⁹

12. While the king was at his table,
my spikenard gave out its fragrance.

13. A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me,
between my breasts he shall lie.¹⁰

14. A cluster of henna is my beloved to me
in the vineyards of En-gedi.

בְּרִמֵּי שָׁלֵי לֹא גַּטְרָתִי:

ז. תְּגִידֶה לֹי שָׁאַהֲכָה גַּפְשִׁי

אַיִלָּה חַרְשָׁה

אַיִלָּה פְּרִכְיִין גַּאֲתָרִים

שְׁלֵמָה אַחֲרָה כַּעֲטָלָה

עַל עֲדָרִי חַבְרָרִיךְ:

ח. אַסְלָא תְּרָעֵי לֹקְךְ

נִיפָּה בְּגַשִּׁים

צְאִידְךְ בְּעַקְבֵּי הַשְּׁאָן

וּרְעֵילִי אַתְּ-גִּידִיְתִּיךְ

עַל מְשֻׁבְּנוֹת הַרְעָםִים:

ט. לְסָסְתִּי בְּרַכְבֵּי פְּרֻעוֹה

דְּמִיתִיךְ רְעִיחָה:

י. נָנוּ לְחִינִּיק בְּתַלִּים

צְנָאָרֶךְ בְּחַדּוֹזִים:

יא. תּוֹרֵן זְהָבָן גַּעֲשָׂה-לֹקְךְ

עַם נְקֻרוֹת הַבְּסָףִים:

יב. עַד-שְׁהַמְּלָךְ בְּמִסְפּוֹ

גְּרָדִי נְתַנֵּן רִיחָה:

יג. אַדְוֹרֶת הַמֶּרֶד | דּוֹדִי לִי

כְּבוֹן שְׁנִי לִילִין:

יד. אַשְׁפֵּל הַפְּפָר | דּוֹדִי לִי

בְּכַרְמִי עַזְיָן גָּדִי:

⁶ They enticed me into idol-worship, thus I became blackened. They forced me to guard their vineyards, [their evil ways] and the vineyard which was my heritage from my ancestors, I did not guard.—*Rashi*

⁷ Israel says before Him, “Where will You pasture Your sheep [Israel] among these wolves [the nations] in whose midst they are?” “And where will You give them respite in this exile which is a time of distress. Noon is a time of distress for sheep because the sun is most intense and there is no relief from the heat.—*Rashi*

⁸ God speaks to Israel and tells them to reflect upon the ways of their forefathers and walk in their ways. In that manner they will be saved from the hand of their oppressors. “Shepherds” refers to the leaders of Israel, the Shepherds of God’s holy flock.

⁹ These verses recall the great wealth Israel salvaged from the קִנְוחַ נִמְמָה, the booty of the Reed Sea, after the Egyptians were drowned.

¹⁰ Even though Israel betrayed God by sinning with the “golden calf,” He commanded them to build the Tabernacle so that He would dwell among them. The most sacred place in the Tabernacle was the Ark and the Divine Presence rested בְּאַרְנוֹן גַּן שָׁגַי כָּגִי נְגִי קָרְנוֹן, between the two staves of the Ark which protruded through the Curtain like the breasts of a woman.—*Rashi*

15. Behold you are beautiful, my beloved;
 behold you are beautiful;
 your eyes are like doves.
16. You are handsome, my beloved,
 most handsome;¹¹
 indeed our bed is fresh.¹²
17. The beams of our houses are cedars,
 our panels are cypresses.
- טו. הִנֵּה יְפָה רַעֲיָתִי
הִנֵּה יְפָה
עִינֵּיךְ יוֹנִים:
טו. הִנֵּה יְפָה דָוִדִי
אָף גָּלִים
אָף־עַרְשָׁנוּ רַעֲנָנָה:
טו. קָרְנוֹת בָּתָּנוֹ אֶרְזִים
רַחֲמִינוּ בָּרוֹתִים:

פרק ב

1. I am a rose of Sharon
 a rose of the valleys.
2. As a rose among the thorns,
so is my beloved among the daughters.¹³
3. As an apple tree
 among the trees of the forest,
so is my beloved among the sons;
 in its shade I delighted and sat,
 and its fruit was sweet to my palate.¹⁴
4. He brought me to the banqueting-house,¹⁵
 and his banner is raised over me in love.¹⁶
5. Sustain me with dainty cakes
 refresh my bed with [the scent of] apples;
- א. אַנְיִ חַכְמַלְתְּ הַשְׁרוֹן
שׂוֹשָׁגֶת הַעֲמָקִים:
ב. כְּשׂוֹשָׁגֶת בֵּין קָחוֹתִים
בֵּין רַעֲיָתִי בֵּין הַבָּנוֹת:
ג. כַּחֲפִיעַ
בְּעֵצִי הַיּוֹעֵר
בֵּין דָוִדִי בֵּין הַבָּנִים
בָּצָלוֹ חַמְרָתִי וַיְשַׁבְּתִי
וּפְרִיוֹ מְחוֹק לְחַכִּי:
ד. הַכִּיאָנִי אֶלְכִּית הַיּוֹן
וְדַגְלוֹ עַלְיָ אַהֲרֹה:
ה. סְמִיכָנִי בָּאַשְׁיָוֹת
וּפְרִיָּנִי בָּפְפִוִּיתִים

¹¹ Israel was told that she was beautiful and is praised for her work in building the Tabernacle; but she says that the beauty is not hers, but God's for he overlooked their iniquities and caused His Presence to reside in their midst.—*Rashi*

¹² This sentence as well as the next refers to the **מִשְׁמָרָה**, the Tabernacle.

¹³ Just as the rose retains its beauty and redness although pricked by surrounding thorns, so does My people Israel maintain her faith despite the attempt of the nations to entice her to follow their strange gods.—*Rashi*

¹⁴ The apple tree is shunned by all people when the sun is overhead because it provides no shade. So all the nations fled from the Almighty on the day of the giving of the Torah. But I, Israel, delighted and sat in His "shadow."—*Rashi*

¹⁵ The Tent of the Tabernacle where the details and explanations of the Torah were expounded.—*Rashi*

¹⁶ The Divine Presence, God's banner, dwelt among Israel demonstrating His profound love for us to all the nations.—*Metsudas Dovid*

- כִּי-חוֹלֶת אַהֲבָה אָנִי:
- ו. שְׁמַאלוֹ פַּחַת לְרָאשֵׁי
וַיִּמְנֹו תְּמֻבָּקְנִי:
- ז. הַשְּׁבָעָתִי אַחֲכָם
בְּנָוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָם
- בָּצְבָאֹות אָו בְּאִילּוֹת הַשְׂדָּה
אָס-פְּעִירּוֹ |
- וְאָמ-תְּעֹורְרוֹ אֶת-הַאֲהָבָה
עַד שְׁתַחְפֹּצִים:
- ח. קֹול דָּוִי הַגְּהִזָּה בָּא
מְדָלָג עַל-הַהֲרָיִם
מְקַפֵּץ עַל-הַגְּבָעוֹת:
- ט. דָוָמָה דָוִי לְצָבֵי
אָו לְעַפֵּר הַאִילִים
הַגְּהִזָּה עוֹמֵד אַחֲרֵיכָנוּ
מְשָׁגִית מִן-הַחֲלִינּוֹת
- מֵאַיִזְמָן-הַתְּרָכִים:
- י. עֲנָה דָוִי וְאָמֵר לְיִי
קוֹמֵי לְךָ רָעִיתִי יְפִתִּי
וְלִכְיִלְךָ:
- א. כִּי-הַגָּהָה הַסְּתָרִי עָבָר
הַגָּשָׁם חַלֵּף הַלָּךְ לוֹ:
- for I am lovesick.¹⁷
6. His left hand was under my head
and his right would embrace me.
7. I bind you under oath,
daughters of Jerusalem
- by the gazelles and the does of the field;
that you do not cause hatred
nor disturb this love
while it still pleases.¹⁸
8. The voice of my beloved! Behold he comes;
leaping over the mountains,
skipping over the hills.¹⁹
9. My beloved resembles a gazelle
or a young hart;
behold, he stands behind our wall,
observing through the windows
peering through the lattices.²⁰
10. My beloved spoke and said to me,
“Rise up, my beloved, my fair one,
and go forth.²¹
11. For behold, the winter is past,
the rain is over, and gone.²²

¹⁷ The Midrash remarks that **אוֹשֶׁר אָנִי** allude to the Halachos and **פְּרִיחִים** to the Haggados which are fragrant like apples. According to *Rashi*, Israel declares, “I am sick for want of His Divine love because I thirst for Him here in exile.”

¹⁸ *Rashi* and others explain this verse as Israel adjuring her neighbors not to seize the opportunity of her sinful periods to provoke her to further sin and cause God to discard her. She declares that despite her sins, God’s love is ingrained within her and He still desires her above all nations.

¹⁹ According to *Metsudas Dovid*, Israel voices her faith that the ultimate redemption will come speedily and that God’s Divine love for her will be completely restored.

²⁰ *Rashi* interprets this verse as referring to the exodus from Egypt. Israel declares: “I thought I would be an **עַנְהָה** (a woman bereft of her husband while still legally bound to him) for many more days. Then suddenly—behold, He made it known that He was peering through the windows of heaven taking notice of my suffering, as it said [Exodus 3:7] ‘I have truly seen the affliction of My people.’”

²¹ God said to me through Moshe: “Rise up, **וְעַלְהָ אַחֲכָם מִנִּי מְקָרִים**. I will bring you up and take you away from the affliction of Egypt.”—*Rashi*

²² The days of bondage and slavery are over.—*Metsudas David*

- יב. הַגְּאָנִים גָּרְאוּ בָּאָרֶץ
 עַח הַזְּמִיר הַגִּיעֵץ
 וְקוֹל הַתּוֹרָה
 בְּשֻׁמְעָה בְּאֶרְצֵנוּ:
- יג. הַתְּאַנְּהָל חַנְטָה פָּלִיק
 וְהַגְּפָנִים | סְמִדָּר
 גַּחֲנָנוּ בְּיִם
 קְוֹמִי לְגַעֲנִי יְפָתֵחַ
 וְלִכְיָלָהּ:
- יד. יְזָהֵר בְּחַגְנִי תְּפָלָעַ
 בְּפָלָחָה הַמְּדֻרָּה
 הַרְאִינִי אַתְ-מְרָאֵיךְ
 הַשְּׂמִיעָנִי אַתְ-קָולְךָ
 כִּי-קָולְךָ עַרְבָּכָה
 וּמְרָאֵיךְ נָאוּהָ:
- טו. אֲחוֹז-דְּלָנוֹ שְׁנַעֲלִים
 שְׁעָלִים קָטְנִים מַחְבְּלִים כְּרָמִים
 וּכְרָמֵינוּ סְמִרָּה:
- טו. דָּוִרִי לִי וְאַנִּי לֹא
 הַרְעָה בְּשָׁוְשָׁנִים:
- יג. עַד שִׁיפּוּחַ הַיּוֹם
 וְגַסְךְ הַצְלָלים
 סְבָּבָ דְּמָה-לָלָבָ דָּוִרִי

²³ Rashi interprets blossoms as a reference to Moshe and Aharon who have appeared to care for your needs, and the time has come when you are destined to sing a song praising God for splitting the Reed Sea. The voice of the great guide, מֹשֶׁה [Moshe], is heard when he issues directives to the people.

²⁴ Rashi explains that this verse refers to the time when Pharaoh was pursuing the Jews and found them encamped at the sea. They were trapped—with the sea before them and the Egyptians behind them. They resembled a dove fleeing from a hawk. It flew into the cleft of a rock and found a snake lurking there. It could not enter because of the snake nor turn back because of the hawk.

²⁵ Show me the quality of your deeds—to whom do you turn in time of distress; let Me hear your voice in prayer as it is said, וְיַעֲזֹב אֱלֹהִים יְהָוָה, and the Children of Israel cried out [prayed] to God.—Rashi

²⁶ The foxes refer to the Egyptians who sought to destroy Israel [God's vineyard] in its early formative stage.—Rashi

like a gazelle or a young hart
on distant mountains.²⁷

לֹא־כִּי אָוֶן לְעַפֵּר הַאֲלִילִים
עַל־הָרִים בְּתַרְ:

פרק ג Chapter III

1. On my bed at night,
I sought him whom my soul loves;²⁸
I sought him but did not find him.

2. I will rise now
and roam through the city,
in the market places and in the streets,
I will seek him whom my soul loves;²⁹
I sought him but did not find him.

3. The watchmen found me
those who circle about the city;³⁰
him whom my soul loves,
have you seen him?³¹

4. Scarcely had I departed from them,
when I found him whom my soul loves;³²
I grasped him
and would not let him go
until I brought him to my mother's house
and to the chamber
of her who conceived me.³³

א. עַל־מִשְׁכָּבִי בְּלִילּוֹת
בְּקַلְשְׁתִּי אֶת שָׁאַהֲבָה נִפְשִׁי
בְּקַשְׁתִּיו וְלֹא מִצְאָתָיו:
ב. אַקְרֵבָה בָּאָרֶץ
וְאַסְבָּבָה בָּעִיר
בְּשֻׁוּקִים וּבְרוּחָבוֹת
אַבְקָשָׁה אֶת שָׁאַהֲבָה נִפְשִׁי
בְּקַשְׁתִּיו וְלֹא מִצְאָתָיו:
ג. מִצְאֵנִי הַשְׁמָרִים
נִסְכָּבִים בָּעִיר
אֶת שָׁאַהֲבָה נִפְשִׁי
רְאִיתָם:
ד. כְּמַעַט שָׁעַבְרָתִי מִלְּמָם
עַד שְׁמִצָּאתִי אֶת שָׁאַהֲבָה נִפְשִׁי
אַחֲתִיו
וְלֹא אַרְפָּצֵן
עַד־שְׁהַבִּיאָתִו אֶל־בֵּית אַמִּי
וְאֶל־חֶדְרָה
הַוּרְחָה:

²⁷ According to *Rashi*, Israel's sin of the *golden calf* destroyed the intimacy of God's relationship with her and caused Him to swiftly depart from her and He became distant, far removed from her.

²⁸ During the long nights of exile, Israel seeks its former open, uninhibited relationship with God.—*Alshich*

²⁹ Israel is determined not to sleep through the night of exile, but actively searches out every possible avenue of rapprochement with God.—*Alshich*

³⁰ *Rashi* says that the 'watchmen' refers to Moshe and Aharon who guarded Israel from sin during the Egyptian exile. According to *Alshich* it also refers to Ezra and Nechemiah who were watchmen of Israel during the Babylonian exile.

³¹ Have you any word from Him? Have you been assured of His deliverance?—*Rashi*

³² Shortly after the departure (the death) of Moshe and Aharon, at the end of forty years in the wilderness, Israel saw that God was still with them as he helped them conquer the thirty one kings in the days of Yehoshua.—*Rashi*

³³ Israel declares that she did not rest until she built the Tabernacle at Shiloh.—*Rashi* According to *Alshich* the verse refers to the First Temple, the dwelling place of the Shechinah, and the Second Temple which was a mere chamber compared to the Divine grandeur of the First Temple.

5. I bind you under oath,
daughters of Jerusalem
by the gazelles and the does of the field;
that you do not cause hatred
nor disturb this love
while it still pleases.³⁴

6. Who is this ascending from the desert,
with palm-like pillars of smoke;³⁵
in a cloud of myrrh and frankincense,
of all the powders of the perfume seller?³⁶

7. Behold the bed of Shlomo,³⁷
sixty mighty men are around it;
of the mighty men of Israel.

8. All of them holding swords,
skilled in battle;³⁸
each with his sword at his side
for fear of the nights.³⁹

9. A canopy
has King Shlomo made
of the wood of Lebanon.⁴⁰

10. Its pillars he made of silver,
its covering of gold,
its curtain of purple wool;
its interior bedecked with love⁴¹

ה. הַשְׁבָעִתִּי אֶתְכֶם
בְּנֹות יְרוּשָׁלָם
כַּצְבָּאֹת אָוֹ בְּאֵילּוֹת הַשְׂדָה
וְאִם־תְּפֻעָרְךָ אֲתִיהָ אֲהָבָה
עַד שְׁחַחְפָּצָה:
ו. קַיְ זָאת עַלְהָ מִן־הַמְּדָבָר
כַּתִּימָרוֹת עָשָׂו
מִקְטָרָה מָרֵךְ וְלִבְזָה
מִכֶּל אֲבָקָת רַזְקָל:
ז. הִגְּהָ מִטְחָנוֹ שְׁלִשְׁלָמָה
שְׁשִׁים גְּבָרִים סְכִיבָּלָה
מִגְּבָנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
ח. כְּלָמִים אֲחוֹרִי חָרָב
מִלְמָדִי מִלְחָמָה
אִישׁ תָּרְבוֹ עַל־יִרְבּוֹ
מִפְּתָחָ בְּלִילּוֹת:
ט. אַפְּרִיּוֹן
עִשָּׂה לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלָמָה
מַעֲצֵי הַלְּבָנָנוֹן:
י. עַמְּדִיקִין עִשָּׂה בְּסָרֶף
רַפִּיךְתָּו זָהָב
מַרְכָּבָו אַרְגָּמָן
תוֹכוֹ רַצּוֹף אֲהָבָה

³⁴ See note 18.³⁵ According to *Rashi*, Israel recalls when the Jews marched in the desert led by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. (See Exodus 13:21.)³⁶ This refers to the incense offering which was offered on the Inner Altar.—*Rashi*³⁷ A reference to the Ark, the Tabernacle, and שְׁלָמָה, the Holy Ark. This is in accordance with *Rashi* who interprets לְשָׁלוֹם as לְשָׁלָמָה, the King to whom peace belongs. Thus, the bed of Shlomo refers to the resting place of the Divine Presence.³⁸ This refers to those who are skilled in the warfare of Torah learning.³⁹ They are always on guard lest the Torah be forgotten and troubles befall them.—*Rashi*⁴⁰ A reference to the Temple which was constructed from trees brought from Lebanon.⁴¹ The interior of the Tabernacle and the Temple were arranged with objects symbolizing the love between God and Israel, such as the Ark, its cover, the Cherubim and the Tablets of the Law that were in the Ark.—*Rashi*

from the daughters of Jerusalem.
 11. Go forth and gaze, daughters of Zion,
 upon King Shlomo;
 upon the crown
 with which his mother adorned him
 on the day of his wedding,
 and on the day his heart rejoiced.⁴²

מִקְנּוֹת יְרֵשָׁלָם:
 יא. צַעֲדָה | גָּרוּאִינָה בְּנוֹת צִיּוֹן
 בְּמִלְחָד שְׁלָמָה
 בְּעַטְרָה
 שְׁעַטְרָה-לְלוֹ אָמוֹן
 בְּיֹום חַנְגוֹת
 וּבְיֹום שְׁמַחַת לְבוֹן

Chapter IV פרק ד

1. Behold you are beautiful, my beloved,
 behold you are beautiful,⁴³
 your eyes are like doves⁴⁴
 from within your kerchief;
 your hair is like a flock of goats
 descending from Mount Gilead.⁴⁵

2. Your teeth are like a counted flock
 which have come up from the washing;
 all of which are perfect
 and none are blemished among them.⁴⁶

3. Like a scarlet thread are your lips,
 and your speech is comely;
 like a slice of pomegranate⁴⁷
 are your cheeks
 from within your kerchief.

א. הַנֶּךְ יִפְהָה רְעִיתִי
 הַנֶּךְ יִפְהָה
 עִינְיוֹנִים
 מִבְּעָד לְצַמְתָּחָה
 שְׁעָרָק בְּעִדר הַעֲזִים
 שְׁגָלְשָׂו מְהֻר גָּלְעָד:
 ב. שְׁבִיָּק בְּעִדר הַקָּצְבָּות
 שְׁעָלָו מִן-הַבְּרָכָה
 שְׁכָלָם מִתְּאִימּוֹת
 וְשְׁכָלָה אֵין בָּהָם:
 ג. בְּתִיעַת הַשְּׁנִי שְׁפָתּוֹתִיךְ
 וּמְקֻפָּה נָאָה
 בְּפַלְחָה הַרְמוֹן
 רְקָמָה
 מִבְּעָד לְצַמְתָּחָה:

⁴² This refers to the day of the giving of the Torah when Israel crowned Him as their King and accepted His yoke.

⁴³ God speaks to Israel and praises her, declaring that He is pleased with her offerings.—Rashi

⁴⁴ Your characteristics are like the dove which is loyal to its mate. When it is slaughtered it does not fidget but stretches forth her neck submissively. So have you bent your shoulder to bear My yoke and My awe.—Rashi

⁴⁵ Even the most common people [whose merit is concealed] among you, are as dearly beloved to Me as Yaakov and his sons who descended the slopes of Mount Gilead when they were pursued by Laban. [Genesis 31:23]—Rashi

⁴⁶ This is said in reference to the 12,000 men who fought against Midian [Numbers 31:5]; not one of them was 'blemished' even with suspicion of lewdness. So chaste were they that they brought offerings of atonement even for evil thoughts they might have had.—Rashi

⁴⁷ As numerous as a pomegranate's seeds are the merits of even the most unworthy among you.—Rashi

4. Your neck is like the Tower of David,
built as a model of beauty;⁴⁸

אֶלְף שְׁמָגָן פְּלִי עַלְיוֹ
a thousand shields are hung upon it,
all the quivers of the mighty.

5. Your bosom is like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle⁴⁹

who pasture among the roses.

6. Until the sun spreads
and the shadows flee;⁵⁰

I will go to Mount Moriah
and to the hill of frankincense.

7. You are completely beautiful, my beloved,
and are without blemish.⁵¹

8. With me [will you come] from Lebanon
O bride,

with me from Lebanon will you come;⁵²
you will look from the peak of Amana,
from the peaks of Senir of Hermon,
from the lions' dens,
from the mountains of leopards.

9. You captured my heart, my sister, O bride;
you captured my heart
with but one of your eyes,
with one necklace of your necklaces.⁵³

ד. פְּמִגְדָּל דָּוִיד צָנָאֲרָךְ

בְּנֵי לְמִלְפִּיוֹת

אֶלְף שְׁמָגָן פְּלִי עַלְיוֹ
כָּל שְׁלָטִי הַגְּבוּרִים:

ה. שְׁנֵי שְׁנֵיךְ בְּשֵׁנֵי עַפְרִים
פָּאוּמִי צְבִיה

הַרְעִים בְּשֹׁשְׁגִּים:

ו. עַד שִׁיפּוּת הַיּוֹם
וְנָסְתִּי הַאֲלִילִים

אֶלְךָ לִי אֶלְכָר הַמֹּרְדָּךְ
וְאֶלְגְּבֻעָת הַלְּבָזָנָה:

ז. כָּלָךְ יְפֵה בְּעִיטָה
וּמִום אֵין בָּה:

ח. אַתִּי מַלְכָנוֹן
כָּלָה

אַתִּי מַלְכָנוֹן תְּבֹזָאֵי
פְּשִׂירִי | מַרְאֵש אַמְנוֹה

מַרְאֵש שְׁנֵיר וְחַרְמוֹן
מִמְעָנוֹת אַרְיוֹת

מַהְרָנִי נְמָרִים:

ט. לְבַבְתָּנִי אֲחַתִּי כָּלָה
לְבַבְתָּנִי

בְּאַחַתִּי מַעֲינִיק
בְּאַחַתִּי עַנְקָמָצָרְנִיק:

⁴⁸ The 'Tower of David' refers to the righteous who stand erect as a tower even amid hardship and persecution, without yielding to idolatrous practices. Thus the Sages of Israel serve as a model of behavior for all to behold.—*Rashi*

⁴⁹ According to *Rashi* שְׁנֵי שְׁנֵיךְ, your two breasts, refers to Moshe and Aharon who nursed the nation of Israel in their infant state as a people. They are likened to the twins of a gazelle because they were equal to each other. Others say that it refers to the Written and Oral Torah, which like twins complement one another.

⁵⁰ See notes to 2:17.

⁵¹ When Israel stood at Sinai to accept the Torah, they were all in a state of total perfection. There were no lame, nor blind nor deaf, nor imbeciles, nor lepers, nor those who were unclean.—*Midrash*

⁵² God says to His people, "With Me will you be exiled from the Temple [Lebanon]." (See Targum Onkelos to Deuteronomy 3:25 where he translates גַּת קָרְשָׁא וְנַלְנָן as Lebanon.)

⁵³ The Almighty says to Israel, "You captured My heart with but one of your [many] virtues, with your fulfillment of even one of the precepts that adorn you like a necklace.—*Rashi*

10. How beautiful is your love
 my sister, O bride;
how superior is your love to wine,
 and the fragrance of your oils
 to all perfumes.
- יא. נְפַת חֲטָפָנָה שְׁפֹחָתִיךְ פֶּלֶה
דְבָשׂ וְתַלְבֵּשׂ מִלְאָן
וְרִיחַ שְׁמַנִּיק
מִכְלָבְשָׁמִים:
11. Your lips drip flowing honey, O bride;
honey and milk are under your tongue,⁵⁴
 and the fragrance of your garments
 is like the fragrance of Lebanon.⁵⁵
- יב. גַן | נְעֹול אֲחֹתִי כֶּלֶה
גָל נְעֹול
מַעַיִן תְּחִזּוֹם:
12. A locked garden is my sister, O bride;
 a locked up spring,
 a sealed fountain.⁵⁶
- יג. שְׁלָתִיק
פְּרֻקָּס רְמוֹזִים
עַם פָּרָנִי מְגַדִּים
13. Your arid fields
are a pomegranate orchard
 with luscious fruits;⁵⁷
 henna with spikenard.
- יד. גַּרְדֵּק | וּכְרָפֵם
קָנָה וּקְגַּמּוֹן
עַם בְּלָעָזִי לְבָזָה
מָר וְאַהֲלָות
14. Spikenard and saffron,
 calamus and cinnamon,
with all the trees of frankincense;
 myrrh and aloes
 with all the major spices.
- טו. מַעַיִן גְּמִים
בָּאָר מִים חַיִים
נוֹזְלִים מִן-לְבָנָן:
15. You are a garden spring,
 a well of living waters;
and flowing streams from Lebanon.
- טו. עִוָּרִי צָפּוֹן
וּבּוֹאֵי תִּמְןָן
הַפִּיחִי גְּנִי
יְזָלוּ בְשָׁמִינוֹ
16. Awake, wind from the north
 and come, wind from the south,
 blow upon my garden
 so that its fragrance may flow;

⁵⁴ The sweetness of Torah flows from your lips.

⁵⁵ Garments refer to **קדות**, character traits, which like garments are not inborn but must be acquired and worn. The fragrance of garments symbolize the impression they make on others. Similarly, one's **קדות** should be fragrant, leaving a pleasing impression on others.—*Vilna Gaon*

⁵⁶ This is said in reference to the modesty of the women in Israel who shun immorality.

⁵⁷ Even the least gifted [the dry ones] among you are like a pomegranate orchard with luscious fruits.

let my beloved come to his garden,
and eat its luscious fruit.⁵⁸

יבא דודי לגני
ויאכל פרי מגני:

פרק ה Chapter V

1. I have come to my garden,⁵⁹

my sister, O bride,

I have gathered my myrrh with my spice,⁶⁰

I have eaten my sugar cane with my honey,

I have drunk my wine with my milk;⁶¹

eat [my] friends,

drink and become intoxicated,

[my] beloved ones.⁶²

א. בָּאתִי לְגַןִּי

אֶחָתִי בְּלָהֵן

אֲרִיתִי מָרִי עַם־בְּשָׂמִים

אֲכָלִתִי יְעָרִי עַם־דְּבָשִׁים

שְׁתִיתִי יְנִי עַם־חַלְבִּי

אֲכָלוּ רְעִים

שְׁתַׁו וּשְׁכַרְוּ

דָּוְרִים:

2. I slept but my heart was awake;⁶³

a sound! my beloved knocks,

open for me, my sister, my love,

my dove, my perfection,⁶⁴

for my head is drenched [as though] with dew,

my sidelocks drip with the rains of night.⁶⁵

3. I have removed my robe,

how can I put it on?

I have washed my feet,

how can I soil them?⁶⁶

ב. אַנְיִישָׁה וְלֹבֵד עָרָךְ

קָוָל | דָּוְרִי דָּוְפָק

פָּתְחִילִי אֶחָתִי בְּעֵיטִי

יְוֹנָתִי חַטָּהִי

שְׁרָאָשִׁי נְמָלָא־טָל

קָנָצָהִי רְסִיסִי לִילָּהָ:

ג. פְּשָׁתָתִי אֶחָתִבְנָהִי

אַיְכָה אַלְבָשָׁנָה

בְּתָצָתִי אַתְּרָגָלִי

אַיְכָה אַטְּגָּפָם:

⁵⁸ Israel appeals to the Holy One, blessed is He, to once again dwell in the Temple [His garden] and savor the offerings [the luscious fruits] which we will bring there.

⁵⁹ When the Tabernacle was completed, "the glory of Adonoy filled the Tabernacle." [See Midrash to Numbers 13:2]—*Rashi*

⁶⁰ A reference to the incense offered at the dedication of the Tabernacle. This offering was brought by the **קָרְבָּנִים**, Princes of the tribes.—*Rashi*

⁶¹ This refers to the **בְּשָׂרָם**, wine libations.—*Rashi*

⁶² According to *Rashi*, 'Eat my friends' refers to the *kohanim* who were given portions of many offerings, and the rest of the verse refers to Israel who were permitted to partake of the meat of the **בָּשָׂרָם**, peace offerings.

⁶³ Israel recalls how she neglected the service of God as if she were asleep, but nevertheless God, the Rock of her heart was wakeful to guard her.—*Rashi*

⁶⁴ God attempts to arouse Israel to repentance with words of endearment.

⁶⁵ These expressions give voice to Israel's weariness from the hardships she endures in exile. Our heads are drenched with perspiration like dew and rain.—*Etz Yosef*

⁶⁶ I have taken off my robe of devotion and adapted the ways of others, idolatrous peoples.—*Rashi*. God answers Israel, "I have washed My feet of your uncleanness, how can I soil them by returning My Presence in your midst."

4. My beloved sent forth his hand
from the portal,
and my innards longed for him.
- ה. דָוִי שְׁלַח יָדוֹ
מִן־הַתּוֹר
וְמַעֲזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־יְהוּנָה:
וְאַצְבָּעָתִי מַוְרֵעַ עַבְרָה:
5. I arose to open for my beloved;
and my hands dripped myrrh,
and my fingers flowed with myrrh
from the handles of the lock.⁶⁷
- ו. קָמָתִי אָנִי לְפָתָח לְדָוִי
וְנִנְנִי גַּטְפָּה־מָוֵר
בְּקַשְׁתִּיהוּ וְלֹא מַצְאָתִיהוּ
קָרְאָתִינוּ וְלֹא עָנוּנִי:
6. I opened for my beloved,
but my beloved had vanished and gone;
my soul departed as he spoke,
I sought him but could not find him,
I called him but he would not answer.⁶⁸
- ז. מַצְאָנִי הַשְׁמָרִים
הַסְּבָכִים בְּעִיר
גַּשְׁלָאוּ אֶת־רְדִיךְיִם
שְׁמָרִי הַחֲמוֹת:
7. The watchmen found me,
those who go about the city,
they struck me, they wounded me;⁶⁹
they stripped my ornament from me,⁷⁰
[even] the guards of the wall.
- ח. הַשְׁבָעָתִי אֶחָכֶם
בְּנֵוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָם
אִם־תִּמְצָאוּ אֶת־דָוִי
מִהִתְגִּידוּ לוֹ:
8. I bind you under oath,
daughters of Jerusalem;
when you find my beloved,
what will you tell him?
that I am lovesick [for him].⁷¹
- ט. שְׁחוֹלֶת אֲהַבָּה אָנִי
מִהִדּוֹתָךְ
9. With what does your beloved
excel another beloved,
most beautiful among women?⁷²
- י. תִּזְפַּה בְּנָשָׁים

⁶⁷ Israel reacts to God's admonition. She declares that she is prepared to purify herself with precious ointments, symbolizing her repentance, thus removing the foul odor of the past.—*Rashi, Alshich*

⁶⁸ When Israel finally repented and opened her heart to God, her repentance did not nullify the decree completely but it did help to ease the way for rebuilding the Temple when they finally returned from exile.—*Rashi*

⁶⁹ The watchmen refers to Nebuchadnezzar and his army who became the "the watchmen" of the city.—*Rashi*

⁷⁰ This refers to the brutality of the destruction.

⁷¹ Israel adjures the nations of the world who will ascend to Jerusalem in the time to come. 'When you see the Almighty on the day of Judgment, tell Him that I endured all the sufferings of the exile, but my sickness is not physical—it is a sickness of love for Him.—*Vilna Gaon*

⁷² The nations respond, 'With what does your beloved God excel all others that you are ready to suffer so greatly for His Name.'—*Rashi*

With what does your beloved excel another beloved, that you bind us under oath? 10. My beloved is pure white and ruddy, surrounded by myriads. ⁷³ 11. His head is [like] finest gold, ⁷⁴ his locks hang, they are raven-black. ⁷⁵ 12. His eyes are like doves upon brooks of water; bathed in milk, well set in their fullness. 13. His cheeks are like a bed of spice, like towers of perfumes; his lips are like roses, dripping [with] flowing myrrh. ⁷⁶ 14. His hands are like rolls of gold studded with precious gems; ⁷⁷ his innards sparkle like ivory, overlaid with sapphires. ⁷⁸ 15. His legs are like pillars of marble set in sockets of fine gold; his appearance is like Lebanon chosen like the cedars.	מַה־דוֹעַךְ מָרוֹד שִׁפְלָה הַשְׁבֻעָתָנוּ י. דָוֵקִי צָח וְאֶלְוָם דָגָול מַרְכָבָה: י.א. רָאשׁוֹ פְּתַחַם פָּנוּ קְנוֹאָצָחָיו פְּלַטְלִים שְׁחוֹזָות בְּעוֹרְבָב: י.ב. עִינָיו קִיּוּנִים עַל־אֲפִיקִי מַיִם רְתַעַזּוֹת בְּחַלְבָב יְשָׁבּוֹת עַל־מְלָאתָה: י.ג. לְתַחַי כְּעַרְוָגָת הַפְּלָשָׁם מְגַדְלוֹת מַרְקָתִים שְׁפַחְוֹתִים שְׁוֹשָׁגִים נְטָפּוֹת מָוֵר עַבְרָה: י.ד. יְדַיּוֹ גָּלִילִי זָהָב מְמַלְאָיִם גַּמְרָשִׁים מַעֲלָפָת סְפִירִים: טו. שָׂוְקִין עַמְזִידִי שָׁשָׁן מִיְסָדִים עַל־אַרְגִּינִּיפָּנוּ מַרְאָהוּ בְּלָכְנוֹן בְּחוֹר פְּאָרָזִים:
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⁷³ Israel declares, 'My beloved God is pure and cleanses iniquity, and ruddy with vengeance to punish His enemies; He is surrounded by myriads of angels who serve Him.'—Rashi

⁷⁴ According to Rashi ר' שאיה, His head, means His beginning, and refers to the beginning of the Ten Commandments which Israel heard directly from God. Those words, 'I am Adonoy, your God' shone and sparkled like the finest gold.

⁷⁵ This alludes to the tradition that the Torah was written, אֶשְׁשָׁת חֹרֶב עַל גָּבֵי אָשׁ לְקֹהֶה, black fire upon white fire.—Rashi

⁷⁶ This refers to God's utterances at Sinai. The Talmud says 'With every word that went forth from the mouth of God, the whole world filled with [the fragrance of] spices.—Mesechet Shabbos 88b

⁷⁷ The Ten Commandments are like scrolls of gold studded with gems because all 613 Commandments are alluded to therein.—Rashi

⁷⁸ This refers to וְיַעֲרָא לְתַחַי Leviticus, which like the intestines, are in the midst of the body of Torah.—Rashi

16. [The words of] his palate are sweet,
and he is all delight;
this is my beloved,
and this is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.

טו. חֲפֹן מִקְמָקִים
וְכַלּוּ מִקְמָקִים
זֶה דָוֵדִי
וְזֶה גָלִי
בְנֹות יְרוּשָׁלָם:

Chapter VI פרק ו'

1. Where has your beloved gone
O fairest among women?
Where has your beloved turned
that we may seek him with you?⁷⁹
- א. אָנָה תָלַךְ דָוֵדִי
הִיְפָה בְגַשִׁים
אָנָה פָנַה דָוֵדִי
וּנְבָקְשָׁנוּ עַמָּה:
2. My beloved has gone down to his garden,
to the beds of spices;⁸⁰
to graze in the gardens
and to gather roses.⁸¹
- ב. דָוֵדִי יָנַד לְגַפּוֹ
לְעָרְגּוֹת הַבְּשָׂם
לְרַעֲוֹת בְּגַנִּים
וּלְלַקְטָ שׂוֹשָׁנִים:
3. I am my beloved's
and my beloved is mine,
who grazes among the roses.
- ג. אַנְיָ לְדָוֵדִי
וְדָוֵדִי לִי
הַרְוֹעָה בְשׂוֹשָׁנִים:
4. You are beautiful, my beloved, as Tirzah,⁸²
comely as Jerusalem,
awesome as the hosts [of angels].
- ד. יְפָה אַתְ רְעִיאִי כְּחַרְצָה
נְאוּנָה בִּירוּשָׁלָם
אִימָה בְּגַדְלָותָה:
5. Turn your eyes away from me,
for they made me haughty;⁸³
your hair is like a flock of goats
- ה. הַסְּבִבִי עַיְנִיךְ מְגַנְדִי
שָׁהַם הַרְחִיבָנִי
שְׁעַרְקַכְעַרְנָה עַזִּים

⁷⁹ The nations taunt and harrass Israel, "Why has Your God forsaken you?"—Rashi

⁸⁰ According to Rashi, *garden* refers to the Temple, and *beds of spices* to the incense—altar. When the Temple is built, God's Divine Presence will return to us.

⁸¹ In the meantime, He resists His Divine Presence in the synagogue and at the houses of study where He listens to those who converse in Torah, gathering their merits [roses] and recording them in a Book of Remembrance before Him.—Rashi

⁸² Rashi, quoting the Sifri, interprets *תִּרְצָה* not as a place but as a form of the word *pleasing, desirable*. Accordingly, God praises Israel saying: "You are fair my beloved, when you are desirable to Me." When Israel performs the mitzvos which God desires, she is beautiful in His eyes.

⁸³ God declares that it will be impossible to return the Ark, the Ark Cover and the Cherubim to the Second Temple because they inspired Him to manifest a special love for Israel which caused them to take Him for granted and led them to betray Him.

descending from Mount Gilead.⁸⁴

שְׁבַלְשׁוֹ קָנְ-תְּגֵלָעֵד:

6. Your teeth are like a counted flock
which have come up from the washing;
all of which are perfect
and none are blemished among them.⁸⁵

ו. שְׁנִינֶךָ כָּעֵדֶר הַרְחָלִים

שְׁעַלְוּ כָּנְ-הַרְחָצָה

שְׁלָלָט מְחַאֲמָמוֹת

וְשְׁגַלְהָ אֵין בָּהֶם:

ז. כְּפָלָח הַרְמֹן

רַקְמָה

מִכָּעֵד לְצַמְתָּה:

ח. שְׁשִׁים הַמֶּה מְלָכֹות

וּשְׁמִינִים פְּילָגְשִׁים

וְעַלְמָוֹת אֵין מִסְפָּר:

ט. אַחַת הִיא יְוָנָתִי מִמְּתִי

אַחַת הִיא לְאַפָּה

בָּרָה הִיא לְיוֹלְדָתָה

רְאֵה בְּנוֹת וַיָּאָשָׁרְוָה

מְלֻכָּות וּפִילָגְשִׁים וַיַּהַלְלוּהָ:

י. מִזְאַת הַשְׁקָפָה

כְּמָוָ-שָׁחָר

צְפָה כְּלָכְדָה בָּרָה בְּמִזְבֵּחָה

אַיִלָּה כְּפַדְגָּלוֹת:

יא. אַלְגָּבָת אֲגֹז בְּרַקְתִּי

לְרָאוֹת פָּאֵבִי הַפְּלָל

לְרָאוֹת הַפְּרָחָה הַפְּלָנָן?

⁸⁴ See note 45.

⁸⁵ See note 46.

⁸⁶ See note 47.

⁸⁷ According to *Rashi*, the sixty queens refers to the heads of family who were the descendants of Avrohom: sixteen of Keturah, Yitzchok and his two sons, Yishmael and his twelve family heads, the twelve sons of Yaakov, and the sixteen family heads of Eisav. The eighty concubines refers to Noach and his offspring until Avrohom. [The count of all the offspring of those who were saved in the Ark totaled eighty.] And just as queens are superior to concubines, so are Avrohom and his descendants more esteemed than all others.

⁸⁸ This refers to the perfect integrity of Yaakov's children who were without blemish [קָטָטָה שְׁלָמָה].

⁸⁹ When Israel marched forth from Egypt surrounded by the Pillar of Cloud and Fire, they were awesome in the eyes of the nations.

⁹⁰ When one looks at a nut, he sees only a shell but its contents are not visible. Similarly, Israel is modest; her scholars are unpretentious; but when they are examined they are found to be full of wisdom.—*Rashi*

if the pomegranates had sprouted.
 הַנֶּצֶחָה הַרְמֹנִים:

12. I did not know,⁹¹
 ב. לֹא יָדַעֲתִי
 my soul set me
 נַפְשִׁי שְׁמַתִּנִי
 like chariots of a noble people.⁹²
 מְרֻכְבֹּת עָםִי נְדִיבָה:

Chapter VII פרק ז

1. Turn back, turn back [you] perfect one,
 turn back, turn back,
 that we may observe you;⁹³
 what can you see [offer] the perfect one
 that equals the encirclement of the camps?⁹⁴
2. How fair were your feet in sandals,
 O daughter of nobles;⁹⁵
 the roundness of your flanks,
 are like jewels,
 the work of a craftsman.⁹⁶
3. Your navel is like a round bowl,⁹⁷
 which lacks not for mixed wines;⁹⁸
 your stomach is like a heap of wheat.⁹⁹
- A. שׂוֹבֵי שׂוֹבֵי הַשׁוֹלְמִית
 שׂוֹבֵי שׂוֹבֵי
 וְנוֹחֹזָה־בָּךְ
 מִהַּתְּחֹזֶה בְּשׁוֹלְמִית
 בְּמַחְלָת הַמְּתִינִים:
- B. מִהַּיְפֵךְ פָּעֵמִיךְ בְּגַעֲלִים
 בְּתִינְדִּיב
 חַמְפָקִי יְרָבִיךְ
 כְּמוֹ תְּלָאִים
 מַעַשָּׂה יְהִי אָמֵן:
- C. שְׁרַרְךָ אָגָן הַפְּהָר
 אַל־יִחַסֵּר הַמְּזֹג
 בְּטַנְךָ עִירָמָת חַטִּים

⁹¹ Israel exclaims that she did not know how to guard herself from sin.

⁹² I brought these evils upon myself through groundless hatred and controversy, and thus became like a chariot driven upon by the nobles of other nations.

⁹³ According to *Rashi* the nations call to Israel [who is perfect in her faith] enticing her to turn away from Him and join them.

⁹⁴ Israel responds, saying to them, what honor can you offer me that compares to the glory of the banners of the encircling desert camps [as I left Egypt].—*Rashi*

⁹⁵ How fair were your feet when you went up to Jerusalem on your pilgrimages to the Temple to celebrate esach, Shavuos and Sukkos.—*Rashi*

⁹⁶ According to the *Targum*, this is said in reference to their children, products of their loins who are beautiful & the brilliant jewels of the Breastplate which was made for Aharon by Bezalel, the master craftsman.

⁹⁷ This is a reference to the לְבַתְּרִירָה, the Chamber of Hewn Stone, the seat of the Sanhedrin which was situated at the navel [i.e. the center] of the world, and the members of the Sanhedrin were seated in a semi-circle, like the crescent moon.—*Rashi*

⁹⁸ Just as the bowl will not lack for drink so too the Sanhedrin will be a never-ending source of wisdom. [Wine often used in an allegorical manner to describe the wisdom of Torah].—*Rashi*

⁹⁹ Wheat is the staple of life and just as everyone benefits from wheat so do all benefit from the wise decisions of the Sanhedrin.—*Mesechet Sanhedrin* 37a

hedged about with roses. ¹⁰⁰	סַוְגָה בְשׁוֹשָׁגִים:
4. Your two breasts are like two fawns, ¹⁰¹ twins of a gazelle.	ד. שְׁנֵי שְׂנִיק כְשְׁנֵי עֲפָרִים תָּאֵמָן אֶבְיָה:
5. Your neck is like an ivory tower; ¹⁰² your eyes are like pools in Heshbon, at the gate of the populated city, your face is like a tower of Lebanon looking out as far as Damascus. ¹⁰³	ה. צְנוּאָרָך כְמִגְדָל הַשְׁבָּן עֵינֵיך בְּרֻכּוֹת בְּחַשְׁבּוֹן עַל-שָׁעֵר בְּחַרְבִּים אַפְקָך כְמִגְדָל הַלְּבָנוֹן צָוֹפָה פָנֵי דְמַשְׁקָה:
6. That which is upon your head is like Mount Carmel, ¹⁰⁴ and the braid of your head is like [royal] purple wool; your King is bound in its tresses. ¹⁰⁵	ו. רָאשָׁך עַלְיָה כְפָרָמֵל וְדָלַת רָאשָׁך כְאַרְגָּמָן מֶלֶך אָסּוֹר בְּרוּחָתִים:
7. How beautiful and pleasant are you; a love with delights. ¹⁰⁶	ז. מְהִיאִיפִית וּמְהִזְעַמָת אֲהַבָה בְמַעֲנוֹגִים:
8. Such is your stature, likened to a [stately] palm tree; ¹⁰⁷ and your bosom is like clusters. ¹⁰⁷	ח. זֹאת קָוָמָתֶך כְמַתָּה לְחַפֵר וּשְׁרִיק לְאַשְׁפָלוֹת:
9. I said, I will ascend the palm tree,	ט. אָמְרָתִי אָעַלָה בְתַפְרָר

¹⁰⁰ A hedge of roses is hardly an imposing barrier and so too the lightest barrier is sufficient to keep the nation of Israel from sin. This refers to the words of Torah that are as delicate as roses and yet suffice to deter us from sin.—*Rashi*

¹⁰¹ This refers to the two tablets of the Ten Commandments; it might also refer to the king and the *Kohen Gadol*.—*Rashi*

¹⁰² The Sanctuary and the Altar which were erect and tall, as well as the seat of the Sanhedrin, provided Israel with strength and protection like an ivory tower.—*Rashi*

¹⁰³ This is an allusion to the prophecy that in the future the gates of Jerusalem will expand until Damascus.—*Rashi*

¹⁰⁴ A reference to the שְׂנִיק, the *tefillin* of the head, of which it is said: "And all the peoples of the earth will see that the Name of Adonoy is called upon you and they will fear you." (*Devarim* 28:10) The *tefillin* are the strength of Israel and are as awe-inspiring as rocky mountains, of which Mount Carmel is the most prominent.—*Rashi*

¹⁰⁵ This refers to the braided locks of the Nazirite and alludes to the fact that God's Name is associated with the hair of the Nazirite.—*Rashi*

¹⁰⁶ A spiritual love that is befitting to delight in.—*Rashi*

¹⁰⁷ When all the nations succumbed to Nevuchadnezzar and kneeled to the statue, Israel stood upright as the palm tree. Daniel, Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah were likened to the breasts of Israel for as breasts give nourishment to the suckling child, they provided spiritual nourishment, inspiring everyone with the knowledge that there is no God like the God of Israel.—*Rashi*

I will grasp its branches; ¹⁰⁸	אֶחָזֶה בְּסִנְגָּנוֹ
and now, let your bosom	וַיְהִי־וּדָגָן שְׁדֵךְ
remain like clusters of the vine, ¹⁰⁹	כְּאַשְׁכָּלֹת הַגָּפןּ
and the fragrance of your face	וְלִימָא אֲפָךְ
like apples.	בְּתֻפּוֹתִים:
10. And let your speech be like good wine; ¹¹⁰	. וְתַחַדְךָ קְיִינָן הַטוֹּב
it flows for my beloved in sincerity,	הַוּלָךְ לְדוֹרִי לִמְישָׁרִים
causing the lips of sleepers to murmur. ¹¹¹	דוֹכָבְכָב שְׁפָתֵי יָשְׁגִים:
11. I am my beloved's	יא. אַנְיִי לְדוֹרִי
and he longs for me.	וְעַלְיוֹ תְּשַׁוְקְתָּה:
12. Come, my beloved,	יב. לְכָה דּוֹרִי
let us go out to the field,	נִצָּא הַשְׂלָה
let us lodge in the villages.	נִלְגָּה בְּכָפְרִים:
13. Let us rise early for the vineyards, ¹¹²	יג. גַּשְׁפֵּיכָה לְכָרְמִים
let us see if the vine has blossomed,	נִרְאָה אֶם־פְּרָחָה הַגָּפןּ
if the tender grapes have appeared,	פָּתָח הַסְּמָדָר
if the pomegranates are in bloom; ¹¹³	הַגָּנוֹת הַרְמוֹנוֹת
there I will give my love to you. ¹¹⁴	שָׁם אַתְּ־דָּעֵי לְךָ:
14. The baskets emit fragrance,	יד. כְּדֹזְאִים גַּחְנוֹנִית
and at our door are all luscious fruits,	וְעַל־פָּתָחֵינוּ פְּלִימְגָדִים
both new and old;	חַנְשִׁים גַּסְיִישִׁים
my beloved, I have kept them for you.	הַוְּקִי אַפְנָתִי לְךָ:

¹⁰⁸ God declares that He is elevated through Israel's actions and loyalty through which His Name is sanctified among the nations of the world, and thus He declares that He will grasp and cleave to the [children of Israel] branches of this palm tree.

¹⁰⁹ See note 107. This refers to the righteous of each generation.

¹¹⁰ Let your response to taunts of the nations be as clear and strong as the finest wine.—Rashi

¹¹¹ Israel's response to them is "I am my Beloved's [God's]" (see next verse), is such an expression of intense love that even its ancestors [who are asleep] will rejoice and utter thanks for their lot.—Rashi

¹¹² This is a reference to synagogues and houses of study [where Jews assemble at dawn.]—Rashi

¹¹³ According to Rashi the words "If the vine has blossomed" refers to those who are versed only in the Scripture, "If the tender grapes have appeared," is an allusion to those who are versed in Mishnah, and "If the pomegranates are in blossom" refers to those who are versed in Talmud. Each stage suggests a higher degree of ripeness with the students of Talmud representing the level of maturity in Torah wisdom.

¹¹⁴ There I will show you My glory and My greatness, the praiseworthiness of My sons and daughters.

פרק ח Chapter VIII

- א. מִי יְתַנֶּל כָּאֵח לְיִי
יְוַיְקֵשׁ שְׂרֵי אַמְּרֵי
אַמְצָאךְ בְּחוֹזֵךְ
גַּם לְאִזְבֹּז לִי:
- ב. אֲנַהֲנוּ אַכְיָאֵפֵי
אַל-בֵּית אַמְּרֵי
תְּלִמְדָנֵי
אַשְׁקָנֵקְמִינֵן חַלְקָח:
- ג. מַעֲסִים רַמְנִי:
שְׁמַאֲלוֹתָחָת רָאשֵׁי
וַיְמִינֵנוּ תְּחַבְּקָנֵי:
ד. הַשְׁבָעָתִי אַחֲכָם
בְּנֹות יְרוּשָׁלָם
מַה-תְּפֻעֵרָיו |
וּמַה-תְּעַרְרֹו אֶת-הַאֲהָבָה
עַד-שְׁתַחַפֵּץ:
- ה. מִי זֹאת עַלְהָ מִנ-הַמְּדָבֵר
מִתְרַפְּקָת עַל-דָּוֹתָה
תְּמִתְהַפְּוֹת עַזְרָתָךְ
1. If only you were a brother to me,
who had nursed at my mother's bosom;¹¹⁵
when I would find you outside
I would kiss you,
and no one would scorn me.¹¹⁶
2. I would lead you, I would bring you
to my mother's house
that you should teach me;¹¹⁷
I would give you spiced wine to drink,¹¹⁸
of the nectar of my pomegranate.
3. His left hand is under my head
and his right hand embraces me.¹¹⁹
4. I bind you under oath
daughters of Jerusalem
why should you cause hatred
or disturb [this] love
while it still pleases?¹²⁰
5. Who is she that rises from the desert,
clinging to her beloved?¹²¹
beneath the apple tree I aroused you,¹²²

¹¹⁵ Israel pleads with God to rest His Presence upon them once again. Beseeching His Divine aid and comfort, she exclaims, "If only You would comfort me in my exile as Yoseif comforted his brothers though they sinned against him.—Rashi

¹¹⁶ When I would find Your prophets speaking in Your Name, I would embrace them, and they would not scorn me.—Rashi

¹¹⁷ I would ask You to return to the Temple and teach me as You taught Israel in the *Ohel Moed*, Tent of Assembly, during the years of the wilderness.—Rashi

¹¹⁸ This refers to the wine libations on the Altar.—Rashi

¹¹⁹ Israel now addresses the nations, saying: "Even though I complain and lament, my Beloved (God), is my support and comfort in my exile."—Rashi

¹²⁰ Your attempts to detract His love from me will be of no avail, for in time you will witness His love for me—when His Divine Presence will again rest upon me.—Alshich

¹²¹ This refers to Israel in the wilderness. She was elevated through the giving of the Torah and her clinging to the Divine Presence.—Rashi

¹²² This refers to Mount Sinai which was suspended over the Israelites like an apple. There she manifested her love for God.—Rashi

there your mother had birth pains
there she who bore you suffered.

שָׁמֶה חַבְלָתְךָ אֵמֶת
שָׁמֶה חַבְלָתְךָ יִלְנָחֶה
ו. שִׁלְמָנִי כְּחֹזֶם עַל־זָרְעָךְ

6. Set me as a seal upon your heart
as a seal upon your arm,¹²³
for love is as strong as death,¹²⁴
jealousy is as harsh as the grave;¹²⁵
its flashes are flashes of fire
from the flame of God.

כְּחֹזֶם עַל־זָרְעָךְ
כִּי־עֲזָה כְּפָלוֹת אַהֲבָה
קָשָׁה כְּשָׁאָל קָנָאָה
רְשָׁפֵה רְשָׁפֵי אֵשׁ
שְׁלָהָבָתְהָ:

7. Many waters
cannot quench the love,
and rivers cannot drown it;¹²⁶
if a man would give
all the wealth of his house for love
they would surely scorn him.¹²⁷

לَا يִכְלֶל לְכֹבּוֹת אֶת־הַאֲהָבָה
וְגַנְעָרוֹת לֹא יִשְׂטַפּוּ
אִם־יִתְהַן אִישׁ
אֶח־כְּלָדָן בְּיִתְהַן בְּאַהֲבָה
בָּזָן יִכְנֹזֶן לֹא:

8. We have a little sister
but she has no bosom;¹²⁸
what shall we do for our sister
on the day she is spoken for?¹²⁹

ח. אֶחָות לְנוּ קָטָנָה
וְשָׁנָים אֵין לָהּ
מַה־גָּעָשָׁה לְאֶחָותֵנוּ
בַּיּוֹם שִׁידְבָּרְכָה:

9. If she be a wall
we will build upon her
a fortress of silver,¹³⁰
if she be a door,
we will enclose her

ט. אִם־חוּמָה הִיא
גְּבָנָה עַלְיָה
טִירָה בְּסָרִי
וְאִם־קָלָה הִיא
נְצֹור עַלְיָה

¹²³ The nation of Israel asks that she never be forgotten by God.—*Rashi*

¹²⁴ Because of our great love for You that we are able to endure death for Your sake.—*Rashi*

¹²⁵ This refers to the jealousies of the nations because of our special relationship to God.—*Rashi*

¹²⁶ This refers to the attempts of the nations to force Israel to renounce her love of God.—*Rashi*

¹²⁷ Hearing these words of loyalty, God testifies that nothing would cause Israel to forsake her love for Him.—*Rashi*

¹²⁸ Israel in her exile is portrayed as a little sister. According to *Rashi*, 'she has no bosom' indicates that she is not yet ripe for redemption.

¹²⁹ How can we sustain her when the nations threaten her with destruction?—*Rashi*

¹³⁰ According to *Rashi*, this verse contains the Almighty's response. He answers, 'If Israel will be firm in her faith and be steadfast against assimilation with the nations, we will become a fortified city for her.'

with panels of cedar.¹³¹

לְתַת אָרוֹן:

10. I am a wall

וְשֶׁדֶן חֲמִינָה

and my bosom is like towers;

אוֹ הַיִתִי בְּעֵינָיו

therefore I am in his eyes

כִּמְצָאָה שָׁלוֹם:

as one who found peace.

יא. כֶּרֶם הַיָּה לְשָׁלֹמָה

11. Shlomo had a vineyard

בְּבָעֵל הַמּוֹן

in Baal Hamon,¹³²

נָתַן אֶת־הַבָּרָם לְגַפְרִים

he gave over the vineyard to caretakers;¹³³

אִישׁ יָבָא בְּפָרִיוֹ

each of them brought for its fruit

אַלְף קְסָפִי:

a thousand pieces of silver.¹³⁴

יב. כְּרָמִי שְׁלֵי לְפָנָי

12. My vineyard is before me;¹³⁵

הַאֲלָף לְקָרְבָּה

the thousand are yours, Shlomo,

וְמִאֱתָקִים

and two hundred

לְגַטְרִים אֶחָד־פָּרִיוֹ:

are for those who guard its fruit.¹³⁶

יג. הַיּוֹשֵׁבּ בְּגַתִּים

13. You who sit in the gardens,

חוּבָרִים מַקְשִׁיבִים לְקוֹלֶךָ

companions listen to your voice,¹³⁷

הַשְׁמִיעָנִים:

let me hear [your voice].

יד. בָּרָח | דָוִי

14. Flee my beloved

וַיַּדְמָה־לְךָ לָצְבִּי

and be like a gazelle

אוֹ לְעֵפֶר הַאֲלִילִים

or a young hart¹³⁸

עַל הַר בְּשָׂמִים:

upon the mountains of spices.¹³⁹

¹³¹ But if she will be like a door which revolves on its hinges and opens whenever someone knocks indicating she is open to all their enticement, we will merely panel her doors which will be eaten away and leave her exposed.—*Rashi*

¹³² הַלְּשׁוֹן is a reference to God, Who is described as הַלְּךָ שְׁנָשְׁלִיטָם שְׁלֹמָה, King to Whom peace belongs. The verse is thus interpreted by *Rashi*: God had a vineyard (Israel) who dwelled in Jerusalem (a city of המון, of multitudes).

¹³³ God gave over His people into the hands of harsh rulers:—Babylon, Greece, and Edom.

¹³⁴ They imposed exorbitant taxes and fines upon Israel.—*Rashi*

¹³⁵ “Despite that Israel was given into your hands, she remains Mine,” says the Almighty.—*Rashi*

¹³⁶ The nations declare that they will return whatever they extorted from Israel, plus a penalty of an additional fifth.—*Rashi*

¹³⁷ God now addresses Israel: “You who are scattered in the exile, tending the gardens of others, and yet dwell in the synagogues and study-houses, the Heavenly Angels, (your companions) listen to your prayers and the sound of your Torah study.”—*Rashi*

¹³⁸ Finally, Israel pleads with God to flee from this Exile and deliver her from it. (Our Sages relate that He has been with us in all our exiles.) She beseeches Him to hasten the redemption with the swiftness of a gazelle or a young hart.—*Rashi*

¹³⁹ This is a reference to the Holy Temple on Mount Moriah. May it be rebuilt speedily in our days. Amen.—*Rashi*

Preface to Koheles

The Book of Koheles was the subject of great debate by the Rabbis as to its worthiness to be included in the Holy Scriptures. The opinion of the School of Hillel prevailed and it was finally accepted because of the concluding thesis in the summing up of Koheles. "In conclusion, after all has been heard; fear God and preserve His commandments for this is the whole duty of man."

The Book of Koheles is a mixture of hope and despair, of darkness and light, of joy and sadness and of life and death. Solomon plays the role of an instructor, describing the two contrasting facets of life—the existence of good and evil, materialism and the spiritual grandeur of human life. He also depicts the alternating moods of man—his inclination to follow the vanities and the follies for the momentary pleasures they may bring and then the other mood of choosing the moral and the noble pursuits of Torah life. The Book reflects the constant friction between these two inclinations, in their battleground which is man himself.

The Festival of Sukkos is surely the most appropriate period of the year for the reading of Koheles which contains these contradictions. It is the Festival which occurs at a time of material abundance and at the same time it is a Festival of deep spiritual experience. The Jew sees himself surrounded with plenty and might imagine himself self-sufficient. Precisely at that moment he is summoned to the humble abode of the Sukkah and peering through the scant covering above him, gazes at the heavens and contemplates his dependence upon God.

It was natural that Hillel should have defended this book. He understood man's failings and realized that with all his shortcomings there was inherent good in every man. Koheles is the portrait of man who is perhaps the most inconsistent of God's creatures. The Festival of Sukkos is distinguished by its contrasting appeal and Kohells was rightly selected as the book which would best manifest this dual aspect of the Festival.

קוהלֶת Koheles

פרק א Chapter I

1. The words of Koheles, the son of David,¹
king in Jerusalem.²
2. Vanity of vanities, said Koheles:
vanity of vanities, all is vanity.
3. What profit does man have
for all his labor
which he labors beneath the sun.
4. A generation passes away
and [another] generation comes,
and the earth abides forever.³
5. The sun rises and the sun sets,
and to its place it strives,
to rise there [again].
6. It [the wind] goes toward the south,
and turns about toward the north;
round and round goes the wind,
and upon its circuits, the wind returns.
7. All the rivers flow into the sea,
yet the sea is not full;
to the place where the rivers flow,
there they continue to flow.
8. All things lead to weariness,
- א. דברי קוהלֶת בְּנוֹ־דָוד
מלך בְּירוּשָׁלָם:
- ב. הַכֵּל הַכְּלִים אָמַר קוהלֶת
הַכֵּל הַכְּלִים הַכֵּל הַכֵּל:
- ג. מַה־יִתְהַרְזֵן לְאָדָם
בְּכָל־עַמְלָיו
- שִׁיעַמְלָ פֻּחַת הַשְּׁמָשָׁה:
- ד. דָוָר הַלְּקָדָשָׁה
וְדָוָר בְּאָ
- וְהָאָרֶץ לְעוֹלָם עַמְרָתָה:
- ה. וּנְרֵחַ הַשְּׁמָשׁ וּבָא הַשְּׁמָשׁ
וְאַל־מָקוֹמוֹ שׂוֹאָף
זָוָרָת הִיא שְׁמָה:
- ו. הַוְּלָה אֲלִידָרוֹת
וּסְבוּב אֲלִצְפּוֹן
- סְבוּב | סְבוּב הַוְּלָה הַרוּחַ
וְעַל־סְכִיבָּתוֹ שֶׁב הַרוּחַ:
- ז. כָּל־הַגְּחָלִים הַלְּכִים אֲלִיהָם
וְהַיִם אַיִגְעָנוּ מְלָא
- אַל־מָקוֹם שְׁהַגְּחָלִים הַלְּכִים
שְׁם הִם שְׁבִים לְלִכְתָּה:
- ח. כָּל־תְּקֻבָּרִים יִגְעָזִים

¹ Solomon was the spiritual heir of David, King of Israel, who experienced every facet of human life: its fears, its hopes, its victories and defeats. In his book, Solomon examines all these aspects of human life. He was a king and son of a king, a wise man, son of a wise man, and a righteous man, son of a righteous man.

² Solomon is known by three titles: 1) In Song of Songs 3:11 he is called "King Solomon." 2) In Proverbs 1:1 he is called "King of Israel" and 2) here he is called "King of Jerusalem." The Talmud (*Sanhedrin 20b*) comments that his kingdom was diminished by virtue of sin. At first he was recognized universally as King Solomon. After his sin he was King of Israel—his kingdom limited to the land of Israel, and then only King of Jerusalem.

³ The routine unchanging activity in the world does not inspire man with something new and fresh to satisfy his weary eyes and ears. (Akaidas Yitzchok)

man cannot speak of them;
the eye is not satisfied with seeing,
nor the ear filled with hearing.

9. That which has been is what will be,
and that which has been done
is that which will be done;
and there is nothing new under the sun.⁴

10. Sometimes there is a thing
of which one will exclaim:
“See this is new!”;
it has already been in existence
in the ages which preceded us.

11. There is no remembrance
of earlier generations;
also of the later generations
that are to come,
there will be no remembrance of them
among those who will come after.

12. I, Koheles, have been king
over Israel in Jerusalem.

13. And I applied my heart
to search and explore with wisdom,
concerning all that happens
beneath the heavens;
it is an evil thing
that God has given to mankind
to be afflicted with.⁵

לא-יוכל איש לדבר
לא-ת�헷ב עין לראות
ולא-ת�헷ל און מושמע:
ט. מה-שְׁחִיתָה הוּא שְׁחִיתָה
וּמָה-שְׁגַעַשָּׂה
הוּא שְׁיעַשָּׂה
וְאֵין בֶּל-תְּחַנֵּשׁ תַּחַת הַשְׁמָשׁ:
י. יש דבר
שׁיאמר
ראיה זה חִנְשׁ הָיו
כָּבֵר הַיָּה
לְעֹלְמִים אֲשֶׁר הַיָּה מִלְּפָנָנוּ:
יא. אין זְכָרוֹן
לְרָאשָׁנִים
וְגַם לְאַחֲרָנִים
שְׁיָהָיו
לא-יָהִי לָהֶם זְכָרוֹן
עַם שְׁיָהִי לְאַחֲרָנָה:
יב. אני קָהַלְתִּי מֶלֶךְ
על-יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּירוּשָׁלָם:
יג. וְנַתְּחִי אֶת-לְבֵבִי
לְדָרֹשׁ וְלַחֲווֹ בְּחַקְמָה
עַל בֶּל-אָשֶׁר נָעָשָׂה
תַּחַת הַשְׁמָמִים
הָיו | עַבְנִין רַע
נתן אלְהִים לְבָנֵי הָאָדָם
לְעָנוֹת בָּו:

⁴ Although some eras have produced technological advances, and we are often astonished at new discoveries, yet, Koheles exclaims, everything dates back to antiquity. Moreover, all the forces of nature were a part of Creation and God gave man the inquiring intellect to discover and make use of them. (Breuer)

⁵ Yet it all comes from God. Nothing happens by itself. Though evil is the source of man's unhappiness, it is also the spur that often causes man to seek the Almighty for help. The fear of evil in the form of punishment is what frequently disciplines man, and were it not for the fear of God, humanity would be devoid of all moral discipline.

14. I have seen all the deeds
that were done under the sun;
and, behold,
all is vanity and vexation of spirit.
15. That which is crooked,
cannot be made straight;
and that which is wanting,
cannot be counted.
16. I said to myself:
"Behold,
I have grown and increased in wisdom
over all who were before me
in Jerusalem;
and my heart has perceived
much wisdom and knowledge."
17. And I applied my heart to know wisdom,
and to know madness and foolishness;⁶
I understood that this, too,
was vexation of the spirit.
18. For with much wisdom,
there is much vexation;
and he who increases knowledge
increases pain.
- יד. רָאִיתִי אֶחָד־כָּל־הַמְּעֻשִׁים
שְׁגַעַשׂ מִתְחַת הַשָּׁמֶן
וְהַגָּה
הַכָּל וְרֹעֲוָת רֹוֹת:
טו. מַעֲוָת
לֹא־יָכוֹל לְחַקֵּן
וְחַסְרוֹן:
לֹא־יָכוֹל לְהַמְּנֹנֹת:
טו. דָבָרָתִי אָנָי עַם־לִבִּי לְאָמֹר
אָנָי הַבָּה
הַגְּבָלָתִי וְהַוּסְפָּתִי חֲכָמָה
עַל כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־הִנֵּה לִפְנֵי
עַל־יְרוּשָׁלָם
וְלֹכֶד רָאָה
הַרְבָּה חֲכָמָה וְדָעַת:
ז. גַּאֲחָתָה לְבִי לְדָעַת חֲכָמָה
וְדָעַת הַלְלוֹת וְשַׁכְלוֹת
זְדַעַת שְׁגַם־זָהָב
הַוָּא רְעִיוֹן רֹוֹת:
יח. כִּי בָּרָב חֲכָמָה
רְכִיבָּעָס
וַיּוֹסִיף דָעַת
יְוֹסִיף מְכָאָוב:

פרק ב

1. I said to myself, "Come now,
I will try [the life of] joy,
and enjoy the good life";
and behold, this too was vanity.
- א. אָמַרְתִּי אָנָי בְּלִבִּי לְכַה־זֹּא
אַנְסָכָה בְּשִׁמְתָּה
וּרְאָה בְּטֻוֹב
וְהַגָּה גַּם־הַוָּא הַכָּל:

⁶ Koheles even applied himself to understand madness and folly in his attempt to surmount the frustration and suffering in daily living.

- ב. **לְשׁוֹקָא מִקְרָאֵי מַהֲוָלֶל**
וְלִשְׁמַחָה מִהְזָה עַשְׂהָה:
- ג. **פָּרָתִי בְּלָבִי**
לְמַשּׂוֹךְ בּוֹין אַתְּ-בְּשָׁרִי
וְלִבְנֵי נָתָג בְּחַקְמָה
וְלְאַתְּ בְּסְכִילָה
עַד אֲשֶׁר-אֲרָאָה אֵין-הָטוֹב
לְבָנֵי הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה
תְּחַת הַשְּׁמִים:
- ד. **הַגְּדוֹלָתִי מַעַשֵּׂי**
בְּנִיחַתִי לִי בְּתִים
נְטֻעַתִי לִי כְּרָמִים:
ה. **עֲשִׂיתִי לִי גְּבוֹת וְפְּרָדָסִים**
וּנְטֻעַתִי בְּהַם עַז בְּלַפְרִי:
ו. **עֲשִׂיתִי לִי בְּרַכּוֹת מַיִם**
לְהַשְׁקוֹת מַהְלָם יָצָר
צָוָמָח עָצִים:
ז. **קָנִיתִי עֲבָדִים וְשִׁפְחוֹת**
וּבְנִירְבִּיתִ הָנִיה לִי
גַם מַקְנָה בְּלָר וְצָאן
הַרְבָּה הָנִיה לִי
מִפְלָשָׁה לְפָנֵי בִּירְשָׁלָם:
ח. **בְּנָסְתִי לִי גַּם-כְּסָף וְזָהָב**
וּסְגָלָתִ מֶלֶכִים וּמְמִדְינוֹת
עֲשִׂיתִי לִי שְׁרוֹם וּשְׁרוֹת
וּמַעֲנָגוֹת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם
שְׁקָה וּשְׁדָותָה:
ט. **וְגָדְלָתִי וְהַזְּפָתִי**
2. Of laughter, I said, it is senseless;⁷
and of joy—what does it accomplish.
3. I searched in my heart [for a way]
to pamper my flesh with wine;
while my heart conducted itself with wisdom,
and to grasp foolishness,
until I could see which was best
for men to do
under the heavens
during the brief span of their lives.
4. I made great works;
I built houses for myself,
I planted vineyards for myself.
5. I made gardens and orchards for myself;
and planted in them, every kind of fruit tree.
6. I made pools of water
from which to irrigate the forest,
growing with trees.
7. I acquired men-servants and maid-servants,
and had servants born in my house;⁸
also herds of cattle and sheep
I possessed in greater quantity
than anyone who preceded me in Jerusalem.
8. I also amassed silver and gold,
and treasures of kings and provinces;
I obtained singers and musical instruments,
and things that delight the people,
chests and chests of them.
9. I was great [in wealth], and surpassed

⁷ Our Sages read the word **קָהוֹלֶל** as **קָהוֹלֶל**, praiseworthy. They say that the joy and delight awaiting the righteous in the World to Come is indeed praiseworthy. (Shabbos 30b)

⁸ According to Ibn Ezra. According to Metzudos: caretakers of the house.

all who preceded me in Jerusalem;
also my wisdom remained with me.

10. And whatever my eyes desired,
I did not deny them;
I withheld not my heart
from any joy,
for my heart rejoiced in all my labor;
and this was my portion [reward]
from all my labor.

11. Then I looked upon all my works
that my hands had done,
and on the labor I had performed;
and behold—
all was vanity and vexation of spirit
and there is no profit under the sun.⁹

12. I [then] turned my attention
to behold wisdom,
and madness and foolishness;
for of what value is the man
who would come after the king [to repeat]
that which has already been done [by him].¹⁰

13. Then I perceived that the advantage
of wisdom over foolishness,
was like that of light over darkness.

14. The wise man, his eyes are in his head,
but the fool walks in darkness;
but I also understood
that the same fate befalls both of them.

מְכֹל שָׁנִיה לְפָנֵי בִּירּוֹשָׁלָם
אֶת חַקְמָתִי עַמְּדָה לִי:
. וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר שָׂאַלְכָה עַנְיִנִי
לֹא אָגַלְתִּי מִמְּה
לְאַמְנַעַתִּי אַתְלָבִי
מְפֻלְשָׁמָחָה
כִּילְבִּי שְׁמַחַת מְפֻלְעָמָלִי
נוֹהָגָה חַלְקִי
מְפֻלְעָמָלִי:
יא. וְפַנִּיתִי אָנִי בְּכָל־מְעָשִׁי
שְׁעַשְׁׁנִי יָדִי
וּבְעַמְלֵל שְׁעַמְלָתִי לְעַשְׁוֹת
וְהַגָּה
הַכָּל הַכָּל וְרוּחוֹת רַוַּעַת
וְאֵין יְחִרּוֹן פְּתַת הַשְּׁמַשָּׁה:
יב. וְפַנִּיתִי אָנִי
לְרָאוֹת חַקְמָה
וְהַוְלוֹת וְסְכָלוֹת
כִּי | מֵה הָאָדָם
שְׁיִבּוֹא אֶחָנִי הַפְּלָקָה
אֵת אֲשֶׁר־כָּבֵר עֲשָׂוָה:
יג. וְרָאִיתִי אָנִי שִׁישׁ יְחִרּוֹן
לְחַקְמָה מִן־הַסְּכָלוֹת
קִימְרָוּן הָאָוֹר מִן־הַחַשָּׁה:
יד. הַחַקְמָת עַינְיוֹ בְּרָאָשׁוֹ
וְהַפְּסִיל בְּחַשָּׁק הַזָּקָה
וְיִדְעָתִי גַּם־אָנִי
שְׁמָקָרָה אַחֲרָה אַחֲרִיכֶם:

⁹ Koheles declares that all his wealth has not made him any happier and certainly has not brought greater meaning to life. Nothing of his material endeavors were capable of yielding lasting benefits in this world. (Metsudas Dovid)

¹⁰ Koheles states that it would not be worthwhile for anyone to experiment as he had. The king is best equipped to study the comparison between wisdom and folly based on his tremendous wealth and wisdom. There is no need for the ordinary man to repeat the experiment. (Ibn Ezra)

טו. וְאֶמְרָתִי אֹנוֹ בְּלֵבִי
 בַּמְקֻרְבָּה הַכְּסִיל
 גַּם־אָנִי יָקְרָנִי
 וְלֹפֶה חֲכָמִיתִי אָנִי אָנוֹ יִתְּהָרֵךְ
 וְדָבָרִתִי בְּלֵבִי
 שְׁגַם־זֶה הַכָּל:

טו. כִּי אֵין זְכָרוֹן
 לְחַכְמָם עַם־הַכְּסִיל לְעַזְלָם
 בְּשַׁכְּנָר הַיּוֹם הַבָּא
 הַכָּל נְשָׁפָח

וְאֵיךְ יָמוֹת הַחַכְמָם
 עַם־הַכְּסִיל:

י. וְשַׁנְּאָתִי אֶת־הַחַכְמָם
 כִּי בַּעַלְיִ

הַמְעָשָׂה שְׁנַעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ
 כִּי־הַכָּל הַכָּל וּרְעוֹת רְוֹתָה:

יח. וְשַׁנְּאָתִי אֶנְיָל אֶת־כָּל־עַמְלִי
 שְׁאָנוּ עַמְלָל תַּחַת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ
 שְׁאָנוּיְחֵפָר לְאָדָם

שְׁיִהְיָה אֶחָרַי:

יט. וְקִי יוֹצֵעַ
 הַחַכְמָם יְהִי אָוֹ סָלֵל
 וַיַּשְׁלַט בְּכָל־עַמְלִי

שְׁעַמְלָתִי
 וְשַׁחַכְמָתִי
 תַּחַת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ
 גַּסְמָזָה הַכָּל:

כ. וְסַבּוֹתִי אָנִי לִיאַש אֶת־לְבָבִי
 עַל בָּל־הַעַמֵּל

¹¹ The *Targum* and *Rashi* explain that Solomon was disillusioned with life because he foresaw the evil that would follow his son Rehoboam's accession to the throne. He was aware that the kingdom he had established would become divided with only two tribes remaining loyal to his son.

in which I labored under the sun.

שׁעַמְלָתִי תַּחַת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ:

21. For there is a man who labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill; and [yet] to a man who has not labored,

כִּי־יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁעַמְלָתִי
בְּחִכְמָה וּבְדָעַת וּבְכִשְׁרוֹן
וְלֹאָתֶם שְׁלָא עַמְלִיבָּו

he shall leave it, as his portion;

יַתְנַצֵּחַ חָלֻקָּו

this, too, is vanity and a great evil.

גַּם־זֶה הַבָּל וְרַעֲהָ רַבָּה:

22. For what has a man

כָּבְ. כִּי מַה־הַהֲנָה לְאָדָם

of all his labor,

בְּכָל־עַמְלָתוֹ

and of the ambition of his heart,

שְׁהָיוֹ אַעֲמֵל תַּחַת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ:

for which he labors under the sun?

כָּגְ. כִּי כָּל־יִמְיוֹ מִכְאָבִים

23. For all his days are painful,

וּבְעֵט עֲנֵינוֹ

and aggravation is his lot,

גַּם־בְּלִילָה לְאַשְׁכֵב לְבוֹ

even at night his heart has no rest;

גַּם־בְּלִילָה הַבָּל הוּא:

this, too, is vanity.

כָּדְ. אִין־טוֹב בְּאָדָם

24. Is it not beneficial for man

שְׁיִאָכֵל וּשְׁתָה

that he eats and drinks,

וְהַרְאָה אֶת־נֶפֶשׁוּ טֹוב בְּעַמְלָתוֹ

and shows himself content with his labor?¹²

גַּם־זֶה רְאִיתִי אָנִי

—this, too, I saw,

כִּי מִינְךָ הָאֱלֹהִים הִיא:

that it is from the hand of God.

כָּה. כִּי מִי יִאָכֵל

25. For who should eat

וּמִי יִחְווֹשׁ חַוֵּז מִמְּנִי:

and who should enjoy, if not I?

כָּו. כִּי לְאָדָם שְׁטוֹב לְפָנָיו

26. For to the man who is good in His sight,

נָתַן חִכְמָה וּדָעַת וּשְׁמַחָה

He gives wisdom, knowledge and joy;

וְלֹחֲטָא

but to the sinner,

נָתַן עֲנֵינוֹ לְאָסֵף וּלְכָנוֹס

He gives the urge to gather and accumulate—

לְחַתָּה

that he should [ultimately] hand it [on to him]

לְטוֹב לְפָנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים

who is good in the sight of God;

גַּם־זֶה הַבָּל וּרְעֹות רַוָּת:

this, too, is vanity and vexation of spirit.

¹² Self-denial is alien to Koheles' philosophy. On the contrary, he declares that man should eat, drink, and enjoy life. Koheles *does* object to wealth and pleasure when they are ends in themselves. There must be higher values for which wealth and pleasure serve as means. Man's task is to be content with his wealth. The desire for more only diminishes or destroys the enjoyment of what one already possesses.

Chapter III פרק ג

1. For everything there is a season
and there is a time for everything
under the sun:
- א. לְכָל זָמָן
וְעֵת לְכִלְחֹפֶז
פָּמָת נְשָׁמִים:
2. A time to be born and a time to die;
a time to plant,
and a time to uproot the planted.
- ב. עֵת לִרְקֹד וְעֵת לִמוֹת
עֵת לְטַעַם
וְעֵת לְעֻקּוֹר נְטוּעָה:
3. A time to kill and a time to heal;
a time to wreck and a time to build.
- ג. עֵת לְמַרְגֹּז וְעֵת לְרִפְאָה:
עֵת לְפִרְזֵז וְעֵת לְבָנוֹת:
4. A time to weep and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn and a time to dance.
- ד. עֵת לְבִכּוֹת וְעֵת לְשֹׁחֵךְ:
עֵת סְפֹוד וְעֵת רְקוּד:
5. A time to cast away stones,
and a time to gather stones;
a time to embrace,
- and a time to refrain from embracing.
- ה. עֵת לְנַשְּׁלִיךְ אֲבָנִים
וְעֵת בְּנוֹת אֲבָנִים
עֵת לְחִבּוֹק
וְעֵת לְרַחֲקֵק מַחְקָקָה:
6. A time to seek and a time to abandon;
a time to preserve, and a time to discard.
- ו. עֵת לְבַקֵּשׁ וְעֵת לְאַבְדֵּן:
עֵת לְשִׁמְרָה וְעֵת לְהַשְׁלִיכָה:
7. A time to rip apart and a time to sew;
a time to be silent and a time to speak.
- ז. עֵת לְקַרְוֹעַן וְעֵת לְחַפּוֹר:
עֵת לְחִשּׁוֹת וְעֵת לְדָבָרָה:
8. A time to love and a time to hate;
a time for war and a time for peace.
- ח. עֵת לְאֶהָבָה וְעֵת לְשָׁנָא:
עֵת מְלֻחָה וְעֵת שָׁלוֹם:
9. What benefit [then]
has the worker from his labor?
- ט. מַה יִתְהַרְזֵן
הַעֲשֵׂה בְּאָשָׁר הוּא עָמֵל:
10. I have seen the matter
which God has given to man
to be afflicted with.
- י. רָאַתִּי אֶת־הָעֲנִין
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן אֱלֹהִים לְבָנֵי הָאָדָם
לְעֲנוּתָהּ בָּבוֹן:
11. He has made everything beautiful in its time;
even [a sense of] the external world,
He has set in their heart,
yet man cannot discover
the work
that God has done
from [the] beginning to the end.
- יא. אֶת־הַכְּפֵל עֲשֵׂה יְהָה בְּעֵתוֹ
גַּם אֶת־הַעֲלָם
נָתַן בְּלָבָם
מַכְלֵי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָמֹצֵא הָאָדָם
אֶת־הַמְּעֵשָׂה
אֲשֶׁר־עֲשֵׂה נָאָלָהִים
מִרְאֵשׁ וְעַד־סְוףָה:

12. I know there is nothing better for them
than to rejoice
and perform good deeds in his life.

13. And also, when every man eats and drinks,
and enjoys the good of all his labors,
that is the gift of God.

14. I know
that whatever God does
will endure forever,
nothing can be added to it,
nor anything be diminished from it;
God has so made it
that man should fear before Him.

15. That which already was, exists now,
and that which is to be, has already been;
and God seeks the pursued.¹³

16. And, furthermore, I have seen under the sun:
in the place of justice there was wickedness,
and in the place of righteousness
there was wickedness.¹⁴

17. I said in my heart:
“The righteous and the wicked
God will judge;
for there is a time for every desire,

יב. יְנַעֲתִי כִּי אֵין טוֹב גָּם
כִּי אִם־לְשָׁמוֹת
וְלְעָשֹׂות טוֹב בְּתִינוֹת
יג. וְגַם כָּל־הָאָדָם שִׁיאָכֵל וְשָׁתֶּה
וְרָאָה טוֹב בְּכָל־עַמְלָיו
מִתְחַאֲלָהִים הַיָּא:
יד. יְנַעֲתִי
כִּי כָּל־אָשָׁר יַعֲשֶׂה אֱלֹהִים
הַזָּהָר יְהִי לְעוֹלָם
עַלְיוֹן אֵין לְהֹסִיף
וּמְקֻבֵּן אֵין לְגַרוּץ
וְהָאֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה
שִׁירָאוּ מַלְפִינָיו:
טו. מִה־שְׁחַחַת קָבֵר הַזָּא
נוֹאָשָׁר לְהַיּוֹת קָבֵר הַזָּה
וְהָאֱלֹהִים יַבְקִשׁ אֶת־גְּדוּלָה:
טז. וְעוֹד רָאִיתִי תְּחִתַּת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ
קָמָם הַפְּשָׁפֵט שְׁמָה הַרְשָׁעָה
וּמְקוּם הַאֲדָק
שְׁמָה הַרְשָׁעָה:
יז. אֶמְרָתִי אָנִי בְּלֹבִי
אֶת־הָאָדִיק וְאֶת־הַרְשָׁעָה
יְשִׁפְטֵת הָאֱלֹהִים
כִּי־עַת לְכָל־תְּפִיצָה

¹³ The Midrash lists some examples of God saving the pursued: Noah was persecuted and ridiculed by his contemporaries but God rescued him and called him “righteous.” Abraham was persecuted by his contemporaries, but God selected him to be the father of his people. Isaac was persecuted by the Philistines, but God caused him to become rich and powerful so that they sought to make a treaty with him. Joseph was hated by his brothers, but he gained Divine favor. Moses was pursued by Pharaoh but God elected him to become the leader of the Jewish people. David was obliged to flee from Saul, but God appointed him to be His servant and establish a dynasty.

¹⁴ Koheles refers to justice and righteousness based only on man's intelligence and moral/ethical concepts, that dictate the logic of, and mutual benefit for, man and his neighbor to refrain from exploiting one another. Unfortunately, declares Koheles, logic is not enough. For history has shown that even in the place of justice and righteousness one finds evil. Those who were appointed by man to administer the legal code are often tainted with wickedness and greed. Where there is no fear of God, there is certainly no fear of man.

and for every deed—there.”¹⁵

18. I said in my heart:
“Concerning the state of man,
God has set them apart¹⁶
that they may see

that they themselves are as beast.”

19. For the fate of men
and the fate of the beasts—
the same fate befalls both,
as one dies, so dies the other,
the same breath is in all of them;
and the superiority of man over the beast
is nil
for all is vanity.

20. All go to one place;¹⁷
all come from the dust,
and all return to the dust.

21. Who knows the spirit of man,
whether it rises upwards
and the spirit of the beast
whether it descends to the earth.”¹⁸

22. I perceived, therefore,
that there is nothing better
than man should rejoice in his work,
for that is his lot;

ונעל בְּלַהֲמָעֵשָׂה שֶׁם:

ית. אִמְרָתִי אַנְיִ בְּלַבִּי

עַל־דְּבָרֶת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם

לְכָרְם הָאֱלֹהִים

וְלֹרְאֹות

שְׁחַם־בְּהַפְּמוֹת הַמְּהָ לְהַם:

יט. כִּי מְקֻלָּה בְּגַיִּת־הָאָדָם

וּמְקֻרָה הַבְּהַמָּה

וּמְקֻרָה אַחֲרָלְהַם

כְּמֹות זֶה בְּנֵי מֹות זוֹה

וּרְוִית אַחֲרָלְהַם

וּמְזֻמָּר הָאָדָם מִזְמַרְבָּהָמָה

אַיִן

כִּי הַפְּלָל הַכְּלָל:

כ. הַפְּלָל הַוְּלָגָד אַל־מְקוּס אַחֲרָ

הַפְּלָל גִּנְיוֹת מִזְמַרְבָּהָעַפְרָ

וְהַפְּלָל שְׁבָ אַל־הַעַפְרָ:

כא. מִי יוֹדֵעַ רִוְתָה בְּנֵי הָאָדָם

הַעֲלָה הִיא לְמַעַלָּה

וְרוֹתָה הַבְּהַמָּה

סִירְךָת הִיא לְמַטָּה לְאָרֶץ:

כב. וְרָאִיתִי

כִּי אִין טֻוב

מְאֹשֵׁר יִשְׁמַח הָאָדָם בְּמַעַשָּׂיו

כִּי־הָוָא חַלְקוֹ

¹⁵ According to *Ibn Ezra*, “there” refers to the reward and punishment in the World to Come. Man can do what he pleases in his life in this world, but in the hereafter there will be a day of judgement. (*Midrash*)

¹⁶ Others understand the word “לְגָם” to mean “test.” Koheles says that God wishes to test the sons of man, to see if they will use the freedom of will which He gave them. For this reason, there is no reward or punishment in this world. God wanted to give man every opportunity to exercise his freedom of will without the influence of immediate reward or punishment. Because of this some people see no difference between man and beast for they claim that God allows the wicked to prosper.

¹⁷ They ask: “Then why try to live on a higher level than the beast?”

¹⁸ This might be interpreted as a cynical question by the materialists who claim there is no higher spirit in man. If there is no God, man could not have been created in the image of God.

for who will bring him to see
what will be after him.

כִּי מַיִם יְבָאֶנוּ לְרֹאֹת
בָּמָה שִׁיאֵלָה אֲחֵרָיו:

פרק ד Chapter IV

1. And I returned
and considered all the oppressions
that are committed under the sun;
and behold, tears of the oppressed,
with no one to comfort them,
and from the hand of their oppressors
[flows the] power—
with no one to comfort them.¹⁹
 2. And so I praised the dead
who already died;
more than the living
who are still alive.
 3. And better than both of these
is he who has not yet been born;
who has not seen
the evil deed
that is committed under the sun.
 4. And I observed that all labor
and all skillful work
is the result of man's envy
of his neighbor;
this, too, is vanity and vexation of spirit.
 5. The fool folds his hands
and eats his own flesh.²⁰
- א. וָשָׁבְתִּי אָנִי
וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־כָּל־הַעֲשָׂקִים
אֲשֶׁר נָעֲשִׂים תְּחִתַּת הַשָּׁמֶן
וְהַפְּנִים | דְּקָعַת הַעֲשָׂקִים
וְאֵין לָהֶם מְנֻחָה
וּמִיד עַשְׁקִים
פָּנָן
- ב. וָשָׁבֵת אָנִי אֶת־הַמְּתִים
שְׁכָבֵר מְתוֹ
מִן־מְתִים
אֲשֶׁר הַפְּנִים מִתְּנִנָּה:
- ג. וְטוֹב מְשִׁגְנִים
אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָדוֹן לְאַתָּה
אֲשֶׁר לְאַתָּה
אֶת־הַמְּעָשָׂה הַרְעָה
אֲשֶׁר נָעַשָּׂה תְּחִתַּת הַשָּׁמֶן:
- ד. וְרָאִיתִי אָנִי אֶת־כָּל־עַמָּל
וְאֶת־כָּל־כְּשַׁרוֹן הַמְּעָשָׂה
כִּי־הִיא קָנָאת־אָישׁ
מְרֻעָה
גַּם־זֹה הַכְּלָל וּרְעוֹת רְוִיתָה:
- ה. הַקְּסִיל חַבֵּק אֶת־יִצְחָק
וְאֶכְלָל אֶת־בְּשָׂרָיו:

¹⁹ According to *Ibn Ezra*, this phrase is repeated to emphasize the sorry plight of the downtrodden. Even under the most inhuman oppression no one cares enough to comfort them.

²⁰ The indolent person who sits with his hands folded and performs no work for his own livelihood will eventually die of starvation. (*Ibn Ezra*)

6. Better is a handful [earned] in contentment:
than two handfuls [earned]
in labor and vexation of spirit.

7. And I returned and observed
[another form of] vanity under the sun.

8. There is one who is alone,
with none other beside him,
he has neither son nor brother;
yet there is no end to his labor,
neither is his eye
ever satisfied with riches;²¹

[nor does he ask himself]

For whom do I labor
and deprive myself of goodness?
this too is vanity, and an evil matter.

9. Two are better than one;
because they receive a goodly reward for their work.

10. For if they fall,
one will lift up the other;
but woe to him who is alone when he falls,
and there is no one to lift him.

11. Also, if two lie together
they can be warm;
but how can one be warm alone?

12. And if an individual attacks,
the two of them can stand against him;
and the threefold cord
is not quickly severed.²²

ו. טוב קְלָאכֶת נִנְחָת

מִמְלָא חַפְנִים

עֲמָל וּנוֹעֲתָה רְוִיתָה:

ז. וְשַׁבְתִּי אֲנִי וְאֶרְאָה
הַכְּלָמָתָה הַשְּׁמָמָה:

ח. יֵשׁ אָחָל

וְאֵין שָׂנִי

גַּם גַּן אָחָל אֵין לְלוֹ

וְאֵין קָצֵל כָּל עָמָל לוֹ

גַּם עַיִּינוֹ

לֹא תָשִׁב עַשֶּׁר

וְלִמְיָא אֲנִי עָמֵל

וּמְחַפֵּר אֶת־נְפָשִׁי מִטּוֹךְהָ

גַּס־זָהָה הַכָּל וְעַנְיָן גַּעַהָוָא:

ט. טֻכְּבִּים הַשְׁנִינִים מִן־הַאֲחָד
אֲשֶׁר

יְשַׁלְּהָם שְׁכַר טֻוב בְּעַמְלָם:

ו. כִּי אִם־יִפְלוֹ

הַאֲחָד יִקְרַם אֶת־תְּבִרָהוּ

וְאֵילָו הַאֲחָד שִׁפְלָה

וְאֵין שְׁנִי לְהַקִּימָוֹ

יא. גַּם אִם־יִשְׁכְּבּוּ שְׁנִינִים

וְתַּם לְהָם

וְלֹא חָדָר אִיךְ יִתְּהַםָּה

וְאִם־יִתְּקַפֵּה הַאֲחָד

הַשְׁנִינִים יִעַמְדוּ גַּגְגוֹ

וְתַּחַזֵּת הַמְשַׁלֵּשׁ

לֹא בְּמַהְרָה יִתְּקַחְ:

²¹ This person is never satisfied with his lot even when blessed with riches.

²² If two friends working together have such advantages, imagine how much greater is the benefit when three work together.

13. Better a poor but wise child;	יג. טוב ילד מסכן וחכם
than an old and foolish king,	מלך זקן וכיסיל
who no longer knows	אשר לא ידע
how to be vigilant.	להזהר עוד:
14. Even though he [the child]	יד. כי-
emerged from prison to be king;	מג'ית הסורדים יצא למלך
even though in his own kingdom	כי גם במלכו
he was born a pauper.	נולד ברש:
15. I observed that all the living	טו. ראייתיך כל-החיים
that walk under the sun	המנצחים מתח השמש
were supportive of the young successor	עם הילדר השנהו
who stepped into his place.	אשר יעמדו מתחתיו:
16. There was no limit to all the peoples,	טו. אין-קץ לכל-העם
to all of them whom he lead; ²³	לכל אשר היה לפניו
even though [it is so now]	גם
those who come after [the next generation]	האחרונים
will not rejoice in him;	לא ישמחו בו
for this, too, is vanity	כי גם זה הבל
and vexation of spirit.	ונרעון רוחם:
17. Guard your foot	יז. שמור רגלך
when you go to the House of God, ²⁴	כאשר תהלך אל-בית האלוהים
come near and listen	וקרוב לשמע
rather than offer sacrifices like the fools; ²⁵	מתוך הקסלים זבח
for they do not know	כי אינם יודעים
that they do evil.	לעשות רע:

²³ He governed so well that all acknowledged his excellent leadership.

²⁴ According to *Metsudas Dovid*, Koheles declares: "Watch your step so that you will not have to go to the House of God." He admonishes the people to avoid the obligation to go to the Temple with a sin-offering. It is better not to sin than to seek atonement with an offering.

²⁵ The fools think that the Almighty delights in their sin-offerings. They don't consider that they do evil by sinning and then bringing sacrifices to atone for their transgressions. (*Ralbag*)

פרק ה Chapter V

1. Do not be impulsive with your mouth,
nor let your heart be hasty
to utter a word before God;²⁶
for God is in heaven
and you are on earth,
therefore, let your words be few.
2. For a dream comes with many subjects
and the voice of a fool with many words.
3. When you make an oath to God,
do not delay in its fulfillment,
for He has no desire in fools;
whatever you vow, fulfill.
4. It is better that you not vow [at all]
rather than vow and not fulfill.
5. Do not permit your mouth
to bring guilt on your flesh,²⁷
nor say before the angel
that it was an error;
why should God be angered by your voice,
and destroy the work of your hands.
6. For in the multitude of dreams and vanities
and in the multitude of words;
man should fear God.²⁸
7. Oppression of the poor,
perverting of justice and righteousness—
should you observe these in the state—
do not be astonished by the fact;
- א. אל-תַּבְהֵל עַל-פִּיק
וְלֹכֶד אָלִימָהָר
לְהֽוֹצִיא אָדָם לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים
כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים בַּשְׁמָלִים
וְאַתָּה עַל-הָאָרֶץ
עַל-קָדוֹשָׁה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה מַעֲטִים:
- ב. כִּי בְּאַתְּחַלּוֹס בְּגַב עֲנֵנוּ
וְקֹול קָסִיל בְּרַבְךָ בְּרַבָּים:
- ג. בְּאַשְׁר תֵּדַר נְדָר לְאֱלֹהִים
אֲלַתְּחַר לְשָׁמוֹ
כִּי אֵין חַפֵּץ בְּקָסִילִים
אַתָּה אֲשֶׁר תֵּדַר שָׁלוֹם:
- ד. טֹוב אָשֶׁר לְאַתְּדַר
מִשְׁתְּדוֹר וּלְאַחֲשָׁלוֹם:
- ה. אל-תַּהַתֵּן אָתְ-פִּיק
לְחַטָּיא אָתְ-כְּשָׂרָך
וְאַל-חָמֵר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
כִּי שְׁגַנְתָּה דָּנָא
לְמַה יַּקְצֵף הָאֱלֹהִים עַל-קוֹלֶךָ
וְחַפֵּל אָתְ-מַעֲשָׂה יְהֹוָה:
- ו. כִּי בְּרַבְךָ לִמּוֹת נְבָלִים
וְדָבָרִים מִרְבָּה
כִּי אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים יְהֹוָה:
ז. אִם-עַשְׂקָרְשׂ
וְגַזֵּל מִשְׁפָט וְאַדְךָ
תִּרְאָה בְּמִדְינָה
אל-תַּחַמֵּה עַל-הַחַפֵּץ

²⁶ Don't be hasty to speak critically of God. (*Rashi*)²⁷ When your mouth utters empty vows and promises it brings sin and punishment upon your entire person. (*Ibn Ezra*)²⁸ In the multitude of words that man speaks each day of his life, it is important that man fear God. The temptation to speak evil is so great that only the fear of God can restrain him.

for One higher than the high watches,
and there are high ones above them.²⁹

8. The profit of the earth is desired by all;
the king himself is subject to the soil.

9. He who loves money
will never be satisfied with money,
and he who loves abundance
will have no produce;
this too is vanity.

10. As goods increase
so do those who consume them;
and what advantage has the owner
except beholding them with his eyes.

11. Sweet is the sleep of the laborer,
whether he eats little or much;
but the satiety of the rich
will not permit him to sleep.³⁰

12. There is a sickening evil
[which] I have seen under the sun—
wealth preserved by its owner
to his own detriment.

13. And should he lose that wealth
through some tragic mishap;
and should a son be born to him—
he will have nothing in his hand.³¹

14. As he came from his mother's womb,
naked will he return as he came;
he will take nothing for his labor,

כִּי גָּבֵר מַעַל גָּבֵר שָׁמֶר:
וְגָבֵרים עַלְיוֹם:
ת. וַיַּחֲזֹן אָרֶץ בְּפֶלְחָה
מֶלֶךְ לְשֻׁקָּה נָעֶבֶד:
ט. אַהֲבָה פֶּסֶךְ
לְאִישָׁב עַפְסֶךְ
וּמִ-אַהֲבָה בְּנַמְנוֹן
לְאַחֲבוֹתָה
גַּם-זָהָה הַבָּל:
. בְּרֻכּוֹת הַטּוֹבָה
רְבָוֹת אַכְלִיה
וּמָה-כִּשְׁרוֹן לְבָעֵלִיה
כִּי אַסְ-רַעַת עִינֵּינוֹ:
יא. מִחוּקָה שְׁנַת הַעֲבֵד
אַס-קְמַעַט וְאַס-הַרְבָּה יְאַכֵּל
וְהַשְׁבָּעַל עַלְשִׁיר
אִינְגֵּז מִפְּרִיחַ לְלִישָׁוֹן:
יב. יְשֻׁעָה חֹלוֹתָה
רְאִיתִי תִּפְחַת הַשְּׁמָשׁ
עַשְׂרֵשׂ שְׁמֹור לְבָעֵלִיו
לְרַעֲתוֹן:
יג. וְאַבָּד הַעַשְׂרֵה הַהְוֹא
בְּעַנְנֵן רָע
וְהַוְלִיד בֶּן
וְאַיִן בְּנֵיד מְאוּמָה:
יד. כִּאֲשֶׁר יִצְּא מִפְּטַח אַמְּרוֹ
עַרְוּם יִשְׁׁוֹב לְלִכְחַדְבָּא
וּמְאַגְּמָה לְאִישָׁא בְּעַמְלָיו

²⁹ This refers to the angels who are above the oppressors. They are appointed by God to punish the oppressors. (*Rashi*)

³⁰ This concept is stated in Pirkei Avos 2:7: "the more possessions one has the more worry he has."

³¹ The father will have nothing to bequeath to his son. The rationale that he toiled in order to provide an inheritance for his children will be meaningless when his riches are gone.

[nothing] that he will carry in his hand.

15. This too is a sickening evil; as he came, so shall he depart; what profit did he gain that he toiled for the wind.

16. Also, all his days he eats in darkness; and he has much grief, illness and anger.

17. Behold that which I have seen: it is good, even commendable for one to eat and drink and to enjoy the good of all his labor that he labors under the sun, during the counted days of his life that God has given him for that is his portion.

18. Also, every man to whom God has given wealth and possession, and the power to enjoy them, to take his share and to rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.

19. For they are not many, let him remember, the days of his life;³² while God answers [provides] him with the joy of his heart.

שֵׁילֶךְ בְּקִידּוֹ:
טו. וְגַם־זֹהַרְעָה חֹלוֹת
כָּל־עֲמָת שְׁבָא בְּנֵי־יִلְעָד
וּמָה־יִתְהַרְוֹן לֹא
שִׁיעַמְלָלְרוּתָה:
טו. גַם כָּל־יִמְיוֹ בְּחֻשָׁךְ יַאֲכֵל
וְכָעֵס הַרְבָּה וְחַלְיוֹ וּקְאָפָה:
יז. הַבָּא אֲשֶׁר־רְאִיתִי אָנוֹ
טָוב אֲשֶׁר־יִפָּה
לְאַכְול־לְשָׁתָה
וּלְרָאוֹת טוֹבָה בְּכָל־עַמְלָוֹ
שִׁיעַמְלָל פְּחַח־הַשְּׁמַשׁ
מִסְפֵּר יִמְיִיחֵי
אֲשֶׁר־גַּמְזָלָו הָאֱלֹהִים
כִּי־הַוְאָחָלָקָו:
יח. גַם כָּל־הָאָדָם
אֲשֶׁר־גַּמְזָלָו הָאֱלֹהִים
עַשְׂרָן וּכְסִים
וְהַשְׁלִיטָו לְאַכְלָל מִתְנָגָן
וְלְשָׁאת אַתְּ־חַלְקָו:
וּלְשָׁמַח בְּעַמְלָו
אֵה מְפַתֵּח אֱלֹהִים הִיא:
יט. כִּילָא הַרְבָּה
יָזְכֵר אַחֲרֵי־יְמִיחֵי
כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים מַעֲנָה
בְּשָׁמְתָה לְבָוֹ:

פרק VI

1. There is an evil which I have seen under the sun;

א. יְשַׁרְעָה אֲשֶׁר־רְאִיתִי
פְּתַח־הַשְּׁמַשׁ

³² I.e., let him remember that the days of his life are not many (*Metsudos*).

- and it weighs heavily on man.
2. A man to whom God grants wealth, possessions and honor, and lacks nothing for himself of all he desires, yet God does not give him the power to eat thereof but instead a stranger will enjoy them; this is vanity and an evil disease.
3. If a man begets a hundred [children], and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, and his soul is not sated of goodness, and moreover he has no burial;³³ I say, that better off than he, is the stillborn child.
4. For he [the stillborn child] comes in vain and departs in darkness; and its name shrouded in darkness.
5. Though it never saw the sun, nor knew of it; its contentment is greater than his.
6. Though he live a thousand years twice over, and enjoy no goodness; indeed, to one place, they all go.
7. All man's labor is to fill his mouth; yet his appetite is never filled.
8. What advantage has the wise man over the fool?
- וּנְבָה הִיא עַל־הָאָדָם:
ב. אֵישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִתְּנוּ לְהָאֱלֹהִים
עַשְׂרָה זָנְכָּלִים וְכַבּוֹד
וְאִינְטוֹ חָסֵר לְנֶפֶשׁוֹ
מִפְּלָא אֲשֶׁר־יַחֲזֹה
וְלֹא־יִשְׁלַׁטְבוּ הָאֱלֹהִים
לְאַכְלָל מִפְּנָיו
כִּי אֲישׁ זָנְכָּרִי יִאַכְלֶבֶן
וְהַכְּלָל וְחַלְלֵי רֹעַ הַזֹּאת:
ג. אָסְ-יּוֹלִיד אֲישׁ מָאָה
וּשְׁגִיטְרְבָותִים יְחִיָּה
וּרְבָּא שִׁיהְנִים יְמִינְשָׁנָיו
וּנְפָשׁוֹלָא־תְּשִׁפְעָמָן־הַטּוֹבָה
וּגְסִימְקֻבָּרָה לְאִירְקִיתָה לוֹ
אָמְרָתִי טָוב מִפְּנָיו
הַגּוֹפֶל:
ד. כִּי־בְּהַבְּלָבָא
וּבְחַשְׁךְ יַלְּךָ
וּבְחַשְׁךְ שְׁמוֹ יַכְפֵּה:
ה. גָּסִימָמָשׁ לְאִרְאָה
וּלְאִירָע
גַּתְתָּה לְזָהָמָה:
וְאַלְוְתָה אַלְפָשָׁנִים
פְּצָמִים
וְתוֹבָה לְאִרְאָה
הַלְּאָלָלְמָקוֹם אַחֲד
הַפְּלֵל הַזְּלָקָה:
ז. כָּל־עַמְלֵה הָאָדָם לְפִיו
וּגְסִימְהַגְּפֵשׁ לְאַחֲפְלָא:
ח. כִּי מִה־יִוּתָר לְחַקְם
מִזְ-הַכְּסִיל

³³ Not only did he not enjoy his life but he was denied the final human dignity of burial.

What disadvantage has the poor man who knows how to cope with [the problems of] life?	מִה־לְעָנֵי יֹדֵעַ לְהַלֵּךְ גַּדְתָּם:
9. Better is what the eyes actually see, than the imagination of the soul; this too is vanity and vexation of spirit.	ט. טֹוב מַרְאַת הָעִינִים מִהֶּלְךָ נֶפֶשׁ גַּסְיוֹן הַכְּלָל וַעֲרוּצָת רֹוחֶת:
10. Whatever has been has already been named, and it is foreknown what man is; he cannot contend with one who is mightier than he. ³⁴	ו. מִה־שְׁתִּילָה כְּבָר נִקְרָא שָׁמוֹ וְנוֹעַע אֲשֶׁר־הָיא אָדָם וְלֹא־יָכַל לְרִין עִם שְׁפָקִיר מִמְּנָנוֹ:
11. For there are many things that increase vanity; in what way is man better for it?	יא. כִּי־יש־דְּבָרִים הַרְבָּה מִרְבָּבִים הַכְּלָל מִה־יָּתַר לְאָדָם:
12. For who knows what is good for man in [his] life, in the counted days of his vanity, which he spends as a [mere] shadow; for who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun.	יב. כִּי־מִי־יֹדֵעַ מִה־טֹּוב לְאָדָם בְּתִיְהוּ מִסְפֵּר יְמִינָתִי הַבָּלוּ וַיַּעֲשֵׂם כָּאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִידִינְגִּיד לְאָדָם מִה־יָּהִי אֶתְתָּרוֹ פָּתָח הַשְּׁמָשׁ:

Chapter VII**פרק ז**

1. Better a good name than precious oil; and the day of death than the day of birth.	א. טֹוב שֵׁם מִשְׁמָן טֹוב וַיּוֹם הַמְּלֹות מִיּוֹם הַגָּלָד:
2. Better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living should take it to heart.	ב. טֹוב לְלַכְתָּה אֶל־בֵּית־אָכֵל מִלְכָתָה אֶל־בֵּית מִשְׁׁתָּה בְּאַשְׁר הוּא סֻפְךְ־הָאָדָם וְהַתִּימְנָה אֶל־לְבָבוֹ:
3. Better vexation than levity; for through a grieved countenance, the heart is made better.	ג. טֹוב גַּעַס מִשְׁׁחָק כִּי־בְּרֻעָה פָנִים יִטְבְּלָבָב:

³⁴ This refers to the angel of death. (*Rashi*)

4. The heart of the wise
 [reflect on] the house of mourning;
 but the heart of the fools
 [are attracted] to the house of feasting.
5. Better to hear the rebuke of the wise
 than for man to hear the song of fools.
6. For like the crackling of thorns
 under a pot,
 so is the laughter of the fool;³⁵
 this too is vanity.
7. For quarreling makes the wise foolish,³⁶
 and a gift corrupts the heart.
8. Better is the end of a matter
 than its beginning;
 better is patience than pride.
9. Do not quicken your spirit to anger;
 for anger rests in the bosom of fools.
10. Do not say:
 was it that the former days
 were better than these?
 for it is not out of wisdom
 that you ask this question.³⁷
11. It is good to have wisdom with inheritance;
 and [such wisdom] benefits
 those who see the sun [i.e. mankind].
12. For wisdom shelters
 [as well] as money shelters;
 but the advantage of knowledge
- ד. לְבַבּ חֲכָמִים
 בָּבֵית אֶכְלָל
 וּלְבַבּ פְּסִילִים
 בָּבֵית שְׁמַחָה:
- ה. טֹב לְשֻׁמוֹעַ גָּעֵר חֲכָם
 מְאִישׁ שְׂמֹעַ שִׁיר בְּסִילִים:
- ו. כִּי־כְּקֹול הַפְּרִירִים
 פָּתָח הַפִּיר
 גַּן שְׁעֵק הַפְּסִיל
 וְגַם־זָהָבָל:
- ז. כִּי־עֲשָׂק יְהוָלֵל חֲכָם
 וְנִיאָבָד אַת־לְבֵבְמִתְנָה:
- ח. טֹב אַחֲרִית דָּבָר
 מְרָאשֵׁיתוֹ
- ט. טֹב אַרְדִּירּוֹת מְגַבֵּה רְוּותָה
 כִּי־לְעֵס בְּתִיקְפְּסִילִים נִנוּתָה:
- י. אַל־תְּאָמֶל
 מִהָּנִיה שְׁהִימִּים הַרְאָשָׁׂׂים
 הַיּוֹתָבוֹכִים מְאַלָּה
 כִּי־לֹא מְחַכְמָה
 שָׁאַלְתָּ עַלְזָה:
- יא. טֹבָה חֲכָמָה עַם־גָּלָה
 וַיִּתְּרַ
 לְרָאֵי הַשְּׁמָשָׁה:
- יב. כִּי־בָּאֵל הַחֲכָמָה
 בָּאֵל הַכְּסָף
 נִיחַרְוּן דָּעַת

³⁵ The crackling of thorns in the fire lasts only a brief moment and then it is gone. So, too, the laughter and revelry of fools has no useful purpose or lasting value. (*Alshich*)

³⁶ Quarreling with wicked fools provokes the wise man and causes his wisdom to depart. Because of the taunts of Dathan and Aviram (Exodus 5:21) Moses was moved to provoke the Almighty (Exodus 5:23). (*Rashi*)

³⁷ This question is motivated by emotion rather than by rational study of past and present conditions. Wisdom would have led the individual to confront his problems and overcome them.

is that wisdom preserves the life of him who possesses it. 13. Consider the deeds of God; for who [else] can straighten that which he [man] made crooked. ³⁸ 14. On a day of goodness [prosperity] be in good spirits, and a day of adversity reflect [that]: the one was set up against the other by God, in order that man should not find anything after him. 15. I have seen all things in the days of my vanity, there is a righteous man who perishes [despite] his righteousness, and there is a wicked man whose life is prolonged [despite] his wickedness. 16. Be not exceedingly righteous nor overly wise; why destroy yourself. 17. Be not excessively wicked, ³⁹ and don't be a fool; why should you die before your time. 18. It is best to take hold of one, ⁴⁰	הקַחֲמָה תִּמְשֵׁה בְּעַלְיָה: רָאֶה אֱתָדְעָלָה הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי מִי יַכְלֶל מִלְחָמָן יְגַנְּבֵן אֶת אָשָׁר עִזּוֹת: יְדָה. כִּיּוֹם טוֹב הַיּוֹם בְּטוֹב גַּיּוֹם רָצַחַת רָאָה גַּם אֶת־זֶה? לְעַמְתִּיחָה אַלְפָה הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־דְּבָרָת שְׁלָא? מִמְּאָה אָדָם אֶתְ�ְנוֹ קְמֹאותָה: טַו. אֶת־הַפְּלָן רָאִיתִי כִּיּוֹם הַבָּלִי יְשַׁעַדְיךָ אֶבְרָד בָּצְרוֹקָו וַיְשַׁרְשָׁעָ מַאֲרִיךָ בְּגֻשָּׁחוֹ: טַו. אֶל־תַּהֲרִיךְ יְדִיקְהַרְבָּה וְאֶל־תַּחֲמֹתָס יוֹתָר לְמַה תַּשְׁוּםָם: יְז. אֶל־תַּרְשַׁע הַרְבָּה וְאֶל־תַּהֲרִיךְ סָכָל לְמַה חַמְמוֹת בָּלָא עַתָּךְ: יְח. טֹב אָשָׁר תַּאֲתֹז בָּהּ
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³⁸ And despite this, God extends to him, even when he is immersed in sin, the opportunity to straighten that which he made crooked. He need only reflect and repent and God gives him a chance to begin all over again with a fresh, clean slate.

³⁹ In *Mesechet Shabbos* 31b, Ulla asks: "Is one permitted to be slightly wicked?" He explains that if one indulges in a little wickedness he should not add to it. For example, if a person has eaten garlic and his unpleasant breath reaches his fellow, should he then eat more garlic and intensify the offensive odor? Similarly, one who has sinned should not lose heart, consider himself doomed, and, therefore, continue in his wicked path. He should repent so that his sins will be forgiven.

⁴⁰ This refers to spiritual values.

and also from the other ⁴¹ withdraw not your hand; for he who fears God will discharge his duty to both. ⁴²	וְגַם־מִזֶּה אֲלֹפְנָחָת־יְרַבָּע קִידְרָן אַלְעָם יֵצֵא אֶת־קָלָם: יְט. הַחֲכָמָה תְּעֹזֶל חָכָם מַעֲשָׂרָה שְׁלִיטִים אֲשֶׁר־הַיּוּ בָּעִיר: ב. כִּי אַתָּם אַיִן צְדִיק בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִعַשְׂה יְטוּב וְלֹא־יִחְטָא: כא. גַּם לְכָל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר יַדְבֵּרוּ אֶל־תִּפְנוּ לְבָקָר אֲשֶׁר לְאַחֲשָׁמָע אֶת־עַבְדָּךְ מַקְלָלָב: כב. כִּי גַּם־פְּעָמִים רְפּוֹת יַעֲלְבָק אֲשֶׁר גַּם־אַתָּה קְלַלְתָּ אֶת־רְבָרִים: כג. בְּלִזְהַנְפִּיתִי בְּחָכָמָה אַמְּרָתִי אֶחָפְמָה וְהַיָּא רְחוּקָה מַמְגִינִּי: כד. רְחוֹקָמָה־שְׁרָה וְעַמְקָעַמְקָמִי מַקְאָנוֹי: כה. סְפּוֹתִי אֲגִינְלָבִי לְרַעַת וְלַחֲורָבְקָש חָכָמָה וְחַשְׁבּוֹן וְלַעֲתָרְשָׁעָפְסָל וְהַסְּכָלָות הַזְּלָלוֹת:
19. Wisdom gives [more] strength to the wise than ten rulers of the city.	יְט. הַחֲכָמָה תְּעֹזֶל חָכָם מַעֲשָׂרָה שְׁלִיטִים אֲשֶׁר־הַיּוּ בָּעִיר: ב. כִּי אַתָּם אַיִן צְדִיק בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִעַשְׂה יְטוּב וְלֹא־יִחְטָא: כא. גַּם לְכָל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר יַדְבֵּרוּ אֶל־תִּפְנוּ לְבָקָר אֲשֶׁר לְאַחֲשָׁמָע אֶת־עַבְדָּךְ מַקְלָלָב: כב. כִּי גַּם־פְּעָמִים רְפּוֹת יַעֲלְבָק אֲשֶׁר גַּם־אַתָּה קְלַלְתָּ אֶת־רְבָרִים: כג. בְּלִזְהַנְפִּיתִי בְּחָכָמָה אַמְּרָתִי אֶחָפְמָה וְהַיָּא רְחוּקָה מַמְגִינִּי: כד. רְחוֹקָמָה־שְׁרָה וְעַמְקָעַמְקָמִי מַקְאָנוֹי: כה. סְפּוֹתִי אֲגִינְלָבִי לְרַעַת וְלַחֲורָבְקָש חָכָמָה וְחַשְׁבּוֹן וְלַעֲתָרְשָׁעָפְסָל וְהַסְּכָלָות הַזְּלָלוֹת:
20. For there is not a righteous man on earth; who does [only] good, and never sins. ⁴³	כב. כִּי אַתָּם אַיִן צְדִיק בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִעַשְׂה יְטוּב וְלֹא־יִחְטָא: כא. גַּם לְכָל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר יַדְבֵּרוּ אֶל־תִּפְנוּ לְבָקָר אֲשֶׁר לְאַחֲשָׁמָע אֶת־עַבְדָּךְ מַקְלָלָב: כב. כִּי גַּם־פְּעָמִים רְפּוֹת יַעֲלְבָק אֲשֶׁר גַּם־אַתָּה קְלַלְתָּ אֶת־רְבָרִים: כג. בְּלִזְהַנְפִּיתִי בְּחָכָמָה אַמְּרָתִי אֶחָפְמָה וְהַיָּא רְחוּקָה מַמְגִינִּי: כד. רְחוֹקָמָה־שְׁרָה וְעַמְקָעַמְקָמִי מַקְאָנוֹי: כה. סְפּוֹתִי אֲגִינְלָבִי לְרַעַת וְלַחֲורָבְקָש חָכָמָה וְחַשְׁבּוֹן וְלַעֲתָרְשָׁעָפְסָל וְהַסְּכָלָות הַזְּלָלוֹת:
21. Furthermore, of all the words that are spoken, take them not to heart; lest you hear your own servant curse you.	כב. כִּי גַּם־פְּעָמִים רְפּוֹת יַעֲלְבָק אֲשֶׁר גַּם־אַתָּה קְלַלְתָּ אֶת־רְבָרִים: כג. בְּלִזְהַנְפִּיתִי בְּחָכָמָה אַמְּרָתִי אֶחָפְמָה וְהַיָּא רְחוּקָה מַמְגִינִּי: כד. רְחוֹקָמָה־שְׁרָה וְעַמְקָעַמְקָמִי מַקְאָנוֹי: כה. סְפּוֹתִי אֲגִינְלָבִי לְרַעַת וְלַחֲורָבְקָש חָכָמָה וְחַשְׁבּוֹן וְלַעֲתָרְשָׁעָפְסָל וְהַסְּכָלָות הַזְּלָלוֹת:
22. For also there were many times as you know in your heart that you, too, have cursed others.	כג. בְּלִזְהַנְפִּיתִי בְּחָכָמָה אַמְּרָתִי אֶחָפְמָה וְהַיָּא רְחוּקָה מַמְגִינִּי: כד. רְחוֹקָמָה־שְׁרָה וְעַמְקָעַמְקָמִי מַקְאָנוֹי: כה. סְפּוֹתִי אֲגִינְלָבִי לְרַעַת וְלַחֲורָבְקָש חָכָמָה וְחַשְׁבּוֹן וְלַעֲתָרְשָׁעָפְסָל וְהַסְּכָלָות הַזְּלָלוֹת:
23. All this I have probed with wisdom; I said "I will be wise, but it [proved to be] far beyond me."	כג. בְּלִזְהַנְפִּיתִי בְּחָכָמָה אַמְּרָתִי אֶחָפְמָה וְהַיָּא רְחוּקָה מַמְגִינִּי: כד. רְחוֹקָמָה־שְׁרָה וְעַמְקָעַמְקָמִי מַקְאָנוֹי: כה. סְפּוֹתִי אֲגִינְלָבִי לְרַעַת וְלַחֲורָבְקָש חָכָמָה וְחַשְׁבּוֹן וְלַעֲתָרְשָׁעָפְסָל וְהַסְּכָלָות הַזְּלָלוֹת:
24. That which was, is far beyond me; and so very deep, who can find it.	כג. בְּלִזְהַנְפִּיתִי בְּחָכָמָה אַמְּרָתִי אֶחָפְמָה וְהַיָּא רְחוּקָה מַמְגִינִּי: כד. רְחוֹקָמָה־שְׁרָה וְעַמְקָעַמְקָמִי מַקְאָנוֹי: כה. סְפּוֹתִי אֲגִינְלָבִי לְרַעַת וְלַחֲורָבְקָש חָכָמָה וְחַשְׁבּוֹן וְלַעֲתָרְשָׁעָפְסָל וְהַסְּכָלָות הַזְּלָלוֹת:
25. So I turned about and applied my heart to know, to explore, and to search for wisdom and the reason for things, and to know that wickedness is folly, and foolishness is madness.	כג. בְּלִזְהַנְפִּיתִי בְּחָכָמָה אַמְּרָתִי אֶחָפְמָה וְהַיָּא רְחוּקָה מַמְגִינִּי: כד. רְחוֹקָמָה־שְׁרָה וְעַמְקָעַמְקָמִי מַקְאָנוֹי: כה. סְפּוֹתִי אֲגִינְלָבִי לְרַעַת וְלַחֲורָבְקָש חָכָמָה וְחַשְׁבּוֹן וְלַעֲתָרְשָׁעָפְסָל וְהַסְּכָלָות הַזְּלָלוֹת:

⁴¹ This refers to material values. Koheles says that one should live a well balanced life, neglecting neither the spiritual or the material.

⁴² He who fears God will maintain a healthy body in order to have the stamina to lead a vigorous and useful spiritual life.

⁴³ Complete and total righteousness is an unachievable goal. Man must succumb to sin in some manner—whether in act, speech or thought. (*Ibn Ezra*)

<p>26. And I find more bitter than death, the woman— whose heart is full of traps and nets, her hands as chains; he who seeks to please God, will escape from her, but the sinner will be trapped by her.</p> <p>27. See this is what I have found says Koheles; adding one to another to find an accounting.</p> <p>28. For which my soul searches, and yet I have not found; one [worthy] man among a thousand I have found, but a [worthy] woman among all of them, I have not found.</p> <p>29. See, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they sought out many stratagems.</p>	<p>כו. וּמֹצֵא אֵין מִרְמָרוֹת אֲתִיהָאשָׁה אֲשֶׁר־הִיא מִצּוֹדִים וּמִרְמָמוֹת לִבָּה אֲסֻזְנִים יְדֵיכֶךָ טוֹב לְפָנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים יְמִלְטָמָמוֹת וְחוֹטָא יְלַכֵּד בָּהּ:</p> <p>כו. רָאָה־זָהָם־מִצְאָתִי אַמְנוּתָה קְהַלָּת אַחַת לְאַחַת לְמִצְאָתָבָוּן: כח. אֲשֶׁר עֲזָד־בְּקַשְׁתָּה נְפָשִׁי וְלֹא מִצְאָתִי אַתְּמַמְּד מְלָךְ מִצְאָתִי וְאֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־אָלָה לֹא מִצְאָתִי: כט. לְכָד־רָאָה־זָהָם־מִצְאָתִי אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים אֲתִיהָאָדָם יְשָׁרָר וְהַמָּה בְּקַשׁוֹ יְשַׁבְּנֹתְרָבִים:</p>
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Chapter VIII

פרק	Chap
א.	מי בְּחִילָם
ב.	נִמְיָזֵע פְּשָׁר דָּבָר
ג.	חַקְמַת אָדָם פָּאֵר פָּנָיו
ד.	וְעַזְפָּנִיו יְשָׁגָא:
ב.	אָנִי
ג.	פִּי־מֶלֶךְ שָׁמֶר
ד.	וְעַל־דְּבָרָת שְׁבוּעַת אֱלֹהִים:
ג.	אַל־תַּחֲתֵל מִפְנִיו תְּלַךְ
ד.	אַל־תַּעֲמֶד בְּדָבָר רָע

⁴⁴ This refers to the oath the nation of Israel swore at Sinai to fulfill the commandments of the Torah. (Rashi)

for whatever pleases Him, He does. כִּי־בַּל־אֲשֶׁר־יְחִפֵּץ־יָעֹשֶׂה:

4. For the King's word is all powerful; ד. בְּאַשְׁר־דְּבָר־מֶלֶךְ־שְׁלֹטֹון

and who can say to Him, וְمַיִּיאָמְרֶלֶן:

"What are You doing?" מַה־תְּعֹשֶׂה:

5. He who preserves the commandment ה. שֹׁמֵר־מִצְוָה

will know no evil; לֹא־יָדַע־דְּבָר־רָעָה

and [the significance of] time and judgement וְעֵת־זָמָן־שְׁפָט

is known by the wise man. יְדַעַת־בְּחִכָּם:

6. For every matter ג. כִּי־לְכָל־תְּפִيقָה

there is a time and judgement; יְשֻׁעָה־וּמְשָׁפֶט

for the evil of man overwhelms him. כִּי־רְעֵת־הָאָנָשָׁה־עַלְיוֹן:

7. For he does not know what will be, ד. כִּי־אִינְגָבוֹיְדָעַ מֵה־שִׁיחָה

for when it comes to pass נִיְּפָרְאָשָׁר־יְהָה

who will tell him? מִינִיגָּדְלָה:

8. Man has no power over the spirit, ת. אֵין־אָקְםָשׁ לִיטְבָּרוֹתָה

to retain the spirit, לְכַלּוֹא־אָתָה־הָרוֹתָה

he has no power over the day of death, וְאֵין־שְׁלֹטֹון־בְּיֹום־הַמוֹתָה

nor dispatch in battle; וְאֵין־מְשִׁלְחוֹתָה־בְּמַלחְמָה

nor will wickedness save its perpetrator. וְלֹא־יִמְלֹטוּנָה־אֶחָד־בָּעָלוֹיו:

9. All this I have seen, ט. אֶת־כָּל־זָהָרָאֵיתִי

and I applied my heart נִנְזֹן־אֶת־לְבִבִּי

to [understand] all the work לְכָל־מְעֹשָׂה

that is done under the sun; אֲשֶׁר־נָעַשָּׂה־תַּחַת־הַשְּׁמֶשׁ

there is a time עַתָּה

when man rules over man אֲשֶׁר־שְׁלֹטָה־הָאָדָם־בָּאָדָם

to his detriment. לְנַעַלְוָה:

10. And so I have seen י. וּבְכָן־רָאֵיתִי

how the wicked were buried רְשָׁעִים־קְבָרִים

and came forth anew⁴⁵ וּבָאוּ

[whereas the righteous]

who were gone from the holy place וּמַפְקָדָם־קָדוֹשׁ־יְהָלָכוּ

⁴⁵ Koheles declares that the wicked are perpetuated through their offspring who succeed them.

- were forgotten in the very city where they performed [righteousness:] this, too, is vanity.
- יא. אֲשֶׁר בָּנְעַשְׂוִי גַּם־זֹה הַבָּל:
11. Because the execution of sentence against evil deeds is not done quickly; therefore, the hearts of men are filled with encouragement to do evil.
- יב. אֲשֶׁר חָטָא עָשָׂה רַע מֵאַת וּמְאַרְיךְ לוֹ כִּי גַּם־יוֹדֵעַ אָנִי אֲשֶׁר יְהִי־טֻב לִירְאֵנָה אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יִרְאֵוּ מִלְפָנָיו: ג. וַתּוֹבֵל אֱלֹהִים לְרַשְׁעָה וְלֹא־יָאַרְיךְ זִמְימִים בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר אִינּוּ־רוֹא מִלְפָנֵי אֱלֹהִים: יד. יְשַׁהְבֵל אֲשֶׁר גַּעֲשָׂה עַל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁצְדִּיקִים אֲשֶׁר מַגְעִיעַ אֱלֹהִים קְמַעַשָּׂה הַרְשָׁעִים וַיִּשְׁרַשְׁעִים שְׁמַגִּיעַ אֱלֹהִים קְמַעַשָּׂה הַצְדִּיקִים אֲמִרְתִּי שְׁגַם־זֹה הַבָּל: טו. וְשַׁבְּחָתִי אֲנִי אֶת־הַשְּׁמָךְ אֲשֶׁר אִין־טֻוב לְאָדָם פְּתַח הַשְּׁמָךְ
12. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and his days are prolonged; nevertheless, I know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before His Presence.
13. And it will not be well with the wicked, nor shall he prolong his days which are like a shadow; because he does not fear before the Presence of God.
14. There is a vanity which is done upon the earth: there are righteous men who suffer as if they had performed [the same] deeds as those who are wicked; and there are wicked men who receive [reward] as if they had performed the same deeds as the righteous. I said that this too is vanity.
15. I extolled [the concept of] rejoicing⁴⁶ for there is nothing better for man under the sun

⁴⁶ Kohele extolls the virtue of קְשֻׁתְחַנְּלָקְוּ—that a person should rejoice in his portion. (*Rashi*)

than to eat and drink and be joyful;⁴⁶ and this will accompany him in his toil [all] the days of his life which God has given him under the sun.

כִּי אֵם־לְאָכֵל וְלִשְׁׁתֹּוחֶת וְלִשְׁׁמֹות
וְהֹוא יַלְגֹּו בָּעֲמָלוֹ

ימִתְּנִיו
אֲשֶׁר־גַּמְנִילָוּ הָאֱלֹהִים
פָּתָח הַשְּׁמָשׁ:

16. When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to observe the activity that is done on the earth—

for neither by day nor by night does he see sleep with his eyes.⁴⁷

לְגַעַת חִכְמָה
וְלִרְאוֹת אֶת־הַעֲנוֹן
אֲשֶׁר־גַּעֲשָׂה עַל־הָאָרֶץ
כִּי גַּם־בַּיּוֹם וּבַלְילָה
שְׁנָה בְּעִינֵּיו אִינְגּוֹרָאָה:

17. And I saw all the works of God—that man cannot discover the work that is done under the sun; and though a man labor to seek it out he will not find it; and even though a wise man declares that he knows it, he, too, will not be able to discover it.

יְהֹוָה אֲתִיכְלָמָד
אֲתִיכְלָמָד מִעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים
כִּילָא יוּכָל הָאָדָם לְמַצֹּא
אֲתִיכְלָמָד מִעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר־גַּעֲשָׂה
מִתְּחַדְּשָׁה
בְּשֵׁל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲמֵל הָאָדָם
לְבַקֵּשׁ וְלֹא יִמְצָא
וְגַם אִם־יַאֲמִר הַחֲכָם
לְרֹעֶת
לֹא יוּכָל לְמַצֹּא:

פרק ט Chapter IX

A. 1. For all this I put to my heart and I sought to make all this clear: that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God; whether it be love or hate, man does not know,

כִּי אֲתִיכְלָמָה
נִתְּנִיחַ אֲלִילָה
וְלִכְבָּר אֲתִיכְלָמָה
אֲשֶׁר־הָאֲדִיקִים וְהַחֲכָמִים
וּבְבָדִיקָם בֵּין הָאֱלֹהִים
גַּם־אֲהָבָה גַּם־שְׁנָאָה
אִין יוֹלֵעַ הָאָדָם

⁴⁷ He is so engrossed in this study that sleep eluded him. (*Ibn Ezra*)

<p>all is before them.⁴⁸</p> <p>2. All things come alike to all; the same fate [awaits] the righteous and the wicked, the good and the pure and the impure, to him who brings offerings, and to him who does not bring offerings; as is with the good man so is it with the sinner, as is with the one who swears [easily] so is it with the one who fears an oath.</p> <p>3. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that the same fate awaits all; [therefore],⁴⁹ the hearts of men are filled with evil, and madness is in their hearts during their lifetime, and afterwards they join the dead.</p> <p>4. For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope; for a live dog is better than a dead lion.</p> <p>5. For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and there is no further reward for them, for their memory is forgotten.</p>	<p>הַכֵּל לְפָנֶיךָ: ב. הַכֵּל קָאשֵׁר לְפָלֵל מִקְרָה אַחֲרָה לֹא-קִיקוֹן לְרַשֵּׁעַ לְטוֹב וּלְטָהָר וּלְטָמֵא וְלִזְבֵּחַ כָּלָא שָׂר אִינְגּוֹזְבָּחַ כָּטוֹב כְּחַטָּא הַגְּשֻׁבָּע כְּאָשֵׁר שָׁבוּעָה יִרְאָה: ג. וְהַרְעָבָכְלָשׁ אֲשֶׁר-גִּעְשָׁה תְּמִתָּה הַשְׁמָשׁ כִּי-מִקְרָה אַחֲרָה לְפָלֵל וְגַם לִבְכָּנִי-הַאֲדָם מַלְאָרָעַ וְהַוְּלָלוֹת בְּלִבְבָּם בְּחַיִּים וְאַתְּנִיו אֶל-הַמְּתִים: ד. כִּימִי אָשֵׁר יִתְּפַרֵּךְ אֵל כָּל-הַחַיִּים יִשְׁבְּטַחַן כִּילְכָּלָב חֵי הוּא טָוב מִן-הָאָרִיה הַמְּתָה: ה. כִּי הַחַיִּים יוֹדְעִים שִׁימְתוֹ וְהַמְּתִים אִינּוּנִים יוֹדְעִים מְאוֹמָה וְאַיִן-עוֹד לְהַטְּשֵׁר כִּי נִשְׁפַּח זְכָרִים:</p>
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⁴⁸ The *Ibn Ezra* explains that the phrase "all is before them" refers to the concept of Divine Providence. All is arranged by the Almighty. *Rashi* writes that "all is before them" refers to the fact that man has the intellect to distinguish between what God loves and what He hates.

⁴⁹ Since the same fate awaits all, they attribute everything to chance and not to Divine Providence. This can be of benefit to the righteous as well as the wicked. (*Rashi*)

6. Also their love, their hate,
and their jealousy have already perished;
and a portion
they will never again have
in anything that is done under the sun.

7. Go eat your bread in joy,
and drink your wine with a glad heart;
for already
God has accepted your deeds.

8. At all times,
let your garments be white;
and your head never lack oil.

9. See [to enjoy] life
with the wife you love,
all the days of your vain life
which He has given you under the sun—
all the days of your vanity;—
for that is your portion in life,
and in your labor
in which you toil under the sun.

10. Whatever you are able to do
do with all your might;
for there is neither deed, nor strategy,
nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave
where you are going.

11. Again I saw under the sun:
that the race is not to the swift,
nor the battle to the strong,
nor does bread [come] to the wise,
nor riches to men of understanding,
nor favor to the learned;
for time and chance happen to them all.

12. For also,

ג. גַם אָהָבְתֶם גַם־שְׁנָאַתֶם
גַם־יִקְנָאַתֶם כִּבְרֵר אֲבָדָה
וְתַלְקָה
אֵין־לָהּם עוֹד לְעוֹלָם
בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר־ינְעַשָּׂה מִתְחַדְּשָׂה
ז. לְזֹה אֲכַל בְּשָׁמְחוֹת לְחַמְּרָק
וִשְׁתָה בְּלִבְּ-טוֹב יִגְּנָב
כִּי כִּבְרָה
רָצָה הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־מְعַשְׂיךָ
ח. בְּכָל־עַת
יְהִיוּ בְּגָדוֹךְ לְבָנִים
וְשָׁמַן עַל־רָאשׁ אֶלְ-יִחְסָרוֹ
ט. רָאָה תְּאַמִּים
עַם־אֲשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־אָהָבָה
כָּל־יָמִים תַּיִּה הַבָּלָק
אֲשֶׁר גַּמְנִילָּכְתָּ פָּתָח הַשְּׁמָשׁ
כָּל יָמִים הַבָּלָק
כִּי הָוָא חַלְקָה בְּתִים
וּבְעַמְלָנָה
אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה עַמֵּל מִתְחַדְּשָׂה
י. כָּל אֲשֶׁר חִמְצָא יָדוֹ לְעַשׂוֹת
בְּכָתָף עַשָּׂה
כִּי אֵין מְעַשָּׂה וְחַשְׁבוֹן
וּבְרִית וְחַקְמָה בְּשָׁאוֹל
אֲשֶׁר אָפָה הַלְּךְ שְׁמָה
יא. שְׁבָתִי וְרָאָה תִּמְחַדְּשָׂה
כִּי לֹא לְקָלִים הַמְּרוֹזָן
וְלֹא לְגִבּוּרִים הַמְּלֻחָה
וְגַם לֹא לְחַכְמִים לְחַם
וְגַם לֹא לְגִבּוּרִים עַשָּׂר
כִּי־עַת וְפָגַע יָקָרָה אֶת־כְּלָמָם
יב. כִּי גַם

man does not know his time,
as fish that are caught in a fatal net,
as birds that are caught in a snare;
like them, men are snared
in the moment of misfortune,
when it falls upon them suddenly.

13. This, too, I have seen [concerning] wisdom
under the sun;

and its impact was great upon me.

14. [There was] a little city,
with few men within it;
and a mighty king came upon it
and surrounded it
and built great bulwarks against it.

15. But there was found in the city,
a poor wise man,
and he saved the city with his wisdom;
yet no person remembered
that poor man.

16. And [yet] I said:
“Wisdom is better than might;
[although] a poor man’s wisdom
is despised,

and his words go unheeded.

17. The words of the wise, spoken gently,
are [more] acceptable

more than the shouts of a ruler of fools.

18. Wisdom is better than weapons of war;
but one sinner
destroys a multitude of good.

לא ידוע הארים אֲתָה עַתּוֹ
כְּדִגִּים שֶׁנָּאֵחָזִים בְּמַצְוָה רַעֲהָ

וּבְאָפָרִים הָאֲחֻזּוֹת בְּפַחַ

כְּהָם יוֹקְשִׁים בְּנֵי האָרָם
לְעֵת רַעֲהָ

כְּשַׁתְּפָול עַלְיָהָם פְּחָאמָם:

יג. גַּם־זֶה רַאֲיתִי חֲכָמָה
פְּמָחַת הַשְּׁמָשׁ

וְגַדּוֹלָה הִיא אֱלֹי:

יד. עִיר קְטָבָה

וְאֶנְשִׁים בָּה מַעַט

וּבְאַ-אֲלִיכָה מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹלָה
וְסָבָב אֲתָה

וּבְנָה עַלְיכָה מַצּוּדִים גְּדָלִים:

טו. וּמְצָא בָּה

אִישׁ מִסְפָּן תְּלָם

וּמְלָט־הָוָא אֲתָה־הַעִיר בְּחַכְמָתוֹ
וְאָרָם לְאַכְּרָר

אֲתָה־הָאִישׁ הַמְּסִיקָן הַהְזָא:

טו. וְאֶמְרָתִי אָנִי

טוֹבָה חֲכָמָה מִגְבּוֹרָה

וְחַכְמָת הַמְּסִיקָן

בוֹנוֹה

וְדַבְּרֵינוֹ אִינּוֹ נְשָׁמָעִים:

יו. דְבָרֵינוֹ חֲכָמִים בְּנָתָת

נְשָׁמָעִים

מְזֻעָקָת מוֹשֵׁל בְּכִסְילִים:

יח. טֹבָה חֲכָמָה מִפְלִי קָרְבָּן

וְחוֹטָא אָחָר

יַאֲפִיד טֹבָה הַרְבָּה:

Chapter X

פרק י

1. Dead flies decay and pollute
the perfumer's ointment;⁵⁰
wisdom and honor are outweighed
by a little foolishness.
2. The heart [understanding] of a wise man
is at his right hand;
but the heart of a fool is at his left.
3. Also, when a fool walks by the way,
his heart [understanding] fails him;
and proclaims to all that he is a fool.
4. If the spirit [anger] of the Ruler
flares up against you,
do not leave your place;⁵¹
for softness pacifies great offenses.
5. There is an evil
which I have seen under the sun;
like an error emanating from the ruler.⁵²
6. Folly is set upon great heights;
but the rich sit in low places.⁵³
7. I have seen slaves on horses,
and princes walking on foot
like slaves upon the earth.
8. He who digs a pit will fall into it;
he who breaks down a fence
will be bitten by a snake.
9. He who removes stones will be hurt by them;

- א. זביחי מות יבאיש יכיעץ
שמן רוקם
יכיר מחקמה מכבוד
סקלהות מעת:
- ב. לב חכם
לימינו:
ולוב קסיל לשמאלו:
- ג. גומ-כברך פשך כל הלאה
לbove חסר
ואמר לככל סכל הואא:
- ד. אס-רוח המושל
מעלה עלייה
מקומך אל-מונח
כי מרפאת יניהם חטאיהם גודלים:
- ה. יש רעה ראיית
פתחת השם ש
- כשנה שיצא מלפני השליט:
ו. גפן הפל במרומים רבבים
ועשירים בשפל ישבוי:
- ו. ראיית עבטים על-סוסים
ושלרים הלקים
בעבטים על-הארץ:
- ח. חפר גווץ בו יפול
ופלאן גדר
?שכנו נחש:
- ט. מסיע אבניים יעצב בהם

⁵⁰ A fly is insignificant yet it spoils precious perfume. So, too, even a minor transgression can outweigh much wisdom and nobility. (*Rashi*)

⁵¹ If through your misdeeds God's anger is kindled against you, do not be moved from your efforts to perform good deeds thinking "of what good is my righteousness." (*Rashi*)

⁵² Just as a royal decree made in error is irreversible so are the Divine decrees of God. (*Rashi*)

⁵³ This refers to the members of the Sanhedrin—rich in wisdom and learning, of whom it is written, "they sit upon the ground and keep silent." (Lamentations 2:10)

<p>he who splits logs will be endangered by them.</p> <p>10. If the axe is blunt, and one has not sharpened its edge, he must exert more strength; there is more profit in a skill of wisdom.</p> <p>11. If the snake bites before it is charmed; there is no advantage in having a charmer.</p> <p>12. The words of a wise man win favor; but the lips of a fool devour him.</p> <p>13. The beginning of his words is foolishness, and the end of his talk is evil madness.</p> <p>14. The fool multiplies words; man knows not what will be; and what will be after him, who can tell him.</p> <p>15. The labor of the fools exhaust them; for he does not know the way to the city.⁵⁴</p> <p>16. Woe to you, O land, if your king is a [mere] lad and whose officers feast in the morning.</p> <p>17. Fortunate are you, land whose king is a free [noble] man; and your officers feast at the proper time— in strength and not in drunkenness.</p> <p>18. Where there is slothfulness, the ceiling sags, and where there is idleness, the house leaks.</p>	<p>בּוֹקֵעַ עֲצָאים יִפְּכַּן בָּם:</p> <p>דֶּרֶךְ הַבְּרוּלָה וְהוּא לֹא-פָנִים קָלְקָלָה וְתִלְעִים יִגְבֵּר וַיִּתְרֹזֵן פְּקַשֵּׁיר חַקְמָה:</p> <p>יָא. אָס-יִשְׁׂעַד הַגְּחַשָּׁב בְּלוֹא-לְחַשָּׁב וְאַין יִתְרֹזֵן לְבָעֵל תְּלִשּׁוֹן:</p> <p>יב. דְּבָרֵי פִּיחָצָם תָּן וְשִׁפְתּוֹת בְּסִיל תְּבֻלָּעָנוּ:</p> <p>יג. תְּחִלָּת דְּבָרִי-פְּרִיהוּ סְכָלוֹת וְאַחֲנִית פְּרִיהוּ חֹלְלוֹת רַעֲהָ:</p> <p>יד. וְנַפְּכַּל יַרְבָּה דְּבָרִים לֹא-יִדְעַ הָאָדָם מִה-שִׁיחָה וְאֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה מְאַחֲרָיו מַי יִגְדֵּל לוֹ:</p> <p>טו. עַמְלָת הַכְּסִילִים תִּגְעַזְזֵז אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָנַע לְלַכְתָּאֵל-עִירָה:</p> <p>טוו. אִיְלָךְ אָרֶץ שְׁמַלְכָּךְ גָּעָר וְשְׁנִיךְ בְּפֶלֶךְ יַאֲכָלָה:</p> <p>יט. אֲשֶׁרֶיךְ אָרֶץ שְׁמַלְכָּה בְּנִ-חוֹרִים וְשְׁלִיךְ בְּעֵת יְאָלָלוּ בְּגִבּוּרָה וְלֹא בְּשִׁתְחִי:</p> <p>ית. בְּעַצְלָתִים יִמְקַרְתָּה וּבְשִׁפְלוֹת יִקְרָם יַדְלַף הַבִּיתָה:</p>
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⁵⁴ The fool sets goals for himself that he cannot possibly attain. While he may know what he is striving for he does not know how to achieve it. Naturally, under such circumstances he will exhaust himself wandering in blind alleyways while getting nowhere. He knows of the city but does not know how to get there.

19. A feast is made for laughter,
and wine will gladden life;
and money answers all things.⁵⁵

20. Even in your thoughts
do not curse the king,
and in your bed-chamber
do not curse the rich;
for a bird of the skies
may carry [your] voice,
and that which has wings
will reveal the matter.

יט. לְשׁוֹק עֲשָׂים לִחְם
וַיֵּין יְשֻׁמָּח חַיִם
וְהַכְסֵת יִעֱנֶה אֶת־הַכְלָל:
כ. גַּם בְּמִדְצָעָת
מֶלֶךְ אֶל־חַקְלָל
וּבְחַדְרָיו מִשְׁכָּבָת
אֶל־חַקְלָל עִשְׂרָה
כִּי עַזְف הַשְׁמִינִים
יָולִיך אֶת־הַקּוֹל
וּבְעַל פְּנֵיָם
יָגִיד דְּבָרָה:

Chapter XI

פרק יא

1. Cast your bread upon the waters,
for after many days you will find it.
2. Contribute to seven and even eight;
for you never know
what calamity will come upon the earth.⁵⁶
3. When the clouds are filled with rain
they will empty themselves upon the earth;
and if a tree falls in the south
or in the north,
in the place where the tree falls
there it remains.⁵⁷
4. He who watches [waits] for the wind,
will never sow;
- א. שְׁלַח לְחַמֶּך עַל־פָנֵי הַמִּםִים
כִּי־בָרֵב נִימִים תִּמְצָאנוּ
ב. תְוַיַּחַל לְשָׁבָעָה וְגַם לְשָׁמוֹנה
כִּי לֹא תַרְא
מַה־יִהְיֶה רַעַת עַל־הָאָרֶץ:
ג. אִם־יִמְלָאוּ הַעֲבִים גַּשְׁמָם
עַל־הָאָרֶץ יָרִיקו
וְאִם־יִפּוֹל עַצְמָה בְּדָרוֹם
וְאִם בְּאַפְוֹן
מִקּוּם שִׁיפּוֹל דֵעַז
שֶׁם יְהֹוא:
ד. שְׁמַר רְעוֹת
לֹא יִרְעַז

⁵⁵ Koheles completes the picture of corrupt, pleasure-loving officials who neglect their ‘house’ and their obligations to the people. Idleness brings on moral decay and the problems of the country are forgotten as they revel in drunkenness. Money is used to buy off individuals or groups who criticize their inept rule.

⁵⁶ A person never knows when he will become destitute and require the assistance of others. Koheles declares that such a person might be saved from poverty by virtue of his former acts of charity. (*Rashi*)

⁵⁷ The Talmud (*Avodah Zora* 31a) asks: “What is the meaning of “In the place where the tree falls, there it remains?” The Talmud answers: “The fruit of the tree will not fall far from it.” The nature of children resembles that of their father.

and he who looks to the clouds will never reap. 5. Just as you do not know the way of the wind, nor the nature of that which is hidden in the womb of her that is with child, so will you never know the working of God Who does all things. 6. [Therefore] in the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not remain idle; for you do not know which will prosper, whether this or that, or whether both are equally good. ⁵⁸ 7. And the light is sweet; and it is good [pleasant] for the eyes to behold the sun. 8. For even if many years should man live, let him rejoice in all of them; and remember the days of darkness, for they will be many; all that comes is vanity. 9. Rejoice, young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, follow the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes;	וְרֹאֵה בְּעָנְבִים לֹא יִקְצֹר: כַּאֲשֶׁר אִינָּךְ יוֹצֵא מִהָּדָרֶךְ קְרוּזָת בְּעָצְמָמִים בְּגַטְּוֹן הַמְלָאָה בְּכָה לֹא חִרְדָּע אֲחִידָמָעָשָׂה הַאֲלָתִים אֲשֶׁר יִعֲשֶׂה אֶת-הַכְּלִים: וְבַקְּרָל זָנָע אֶת-זִרְעָק כִּי אִינָּךְ יוֹצֵא אֵין זה יִכְשַׁר הַזָּה אָזְרָה וְאִם-שְׁגִינָהָם כְּאֶחָד טֻבִים: ז. וּמְתוּק הַאֲוֹר וּטוֹב לְעַיְנִים לְרֹאֹות אֶת-הַשְּׁמָשָׁה: ח. כִּי אִם-שְׁנִים הַרְבָּה יִתְהַגֵּה הָאָדָם בְּכָלָם יִשְׁמַח גַּיְנְפָר אֶת-זִמְמִינֵי הַחַשָּׁה כִּי-תְּרַבֵּה יְהִי כָּל-שְׁבָא הַכְּלִים: ט. שְׁמַח בְּחוֹר בְּלִידָוָתֶךָ וַיִּטְבְּכַע לְבָקֶב בִּימֵי בְּחוֹרָזְנִים וַיהֲלֵךְ בְּדַרְכֵי לְבָקֶב וּבְמַרְאָה עִינִים
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⁵⁸ Rabbi Akiva expounded on this verse: he who studies Torah in his youth should also study in his old age (the morning and evening of his life). Rabbi Yehoshua advises: "If a poor man approaches you for help in the morning give him assistance. If another comes in the evening help him also, for you do not know which one is really deserving of your help. If they were both deserving then certainly your charity was worthwhile. (Avos of Rabbi Nossen 3)

but realize that for all these things,
God will bring you to judgement.⁵⁹

10. Therefore, banish anger from your heart
and remove evil from your flesh;
for childhood and youth are vanity.

וְרֹעֶה כִּי עַל-כָּל-אָלָה
יִגְאֵךְ הַאֲלֹהִים בְּמִשְׁפָּט:
. וְהַסְּרֵר פְּעֵץ מִלְּבָד
וְהַעֲבֵר רָעוֹת מִבְשָׁר
כִּי-ינִילְדוּת וְנִשְׁחַרְתּוּת הַבָּל:

Chapter XII פרק יב

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. So remember your Creator
in the days of your youth;
before the evil days come,
and the years draw near
of which you will say:
“I have no desire in them.”⁶⁰</p> <p>2. Before the darkening of the sun,
the light, the moon and the stars;
and the clouds return after the rain.⁶¹</p> <p>3. In the day when trembling prevails
over the preservers of the house⁶²
and the strong men will be bent⁶³
and the grinders cease because they are few,⁶⁴
and the starers in the windows are dimmed.⁶⁵</p> | <p>א. זִכְּר אֱתֹן-בָּרוּאֵיךְ
בְּיָמֵינוּ בְּחוֹרְתָּתְךָ
עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָבֹא יָמֵי הַרְעָה
וְהַגִּיעוּ שָׁנִים
אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמֶר
אַיְזָלִי בְּהָם חִפּזִין:
ב. עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִּחְשֹׁךְ הַשְּׁמֶשׁ
וְהַאוֹר וְהַנִּירָה וְהַפּוֹכְבִּים
וְשַׁבְּוּ הַעֲבָדִים אָמַר הַגָּשָׂם:
ג. בַּיּוֹם שִׁזְעָז
שְׁמָרֵי הַבִּית
וְהַתְּעוּתָה אֲנֵשִׁי הַתִּיל
וּבְטַלְוִי הַטְּחַנּוֹת כִּי מַעַטָּו
וְחַשְׁכּוּ הַרְאֹות בְּאֶרְפּוֹת:</p> |
|---|--|

⁵⁹ Because the dictates of man's heart and the desire of his eyes are not always in the best interests of his fellow man or in his relation to God, Koheles admonishes man to be aware of the ultimate day of judgement.

⁶⁰ Some commentaries hold that this phrase refers to the Messianic era where there is neither merit or wrongdoing. It means: as this is an era of spiritual perfection and of material abundance no opportunity for gaining merit will exist.

Others say that this refers to old age when the worldly delights are no longer an attraction. Man is admonished not to postpone to old age the fulfillment of Divine commandments. In his youth he acquires merit as he is able to show that he overcame his evil inclination, but in his old age all temptations and trials have faded away.

⁶¹ In the following verses Koheles presents a graphic description of man's last years. According to the Targum the sun, the light, the moon and the stars refer to the light of the face, the sparkle of the eyes, the cheeks and the eyes. In old age all these features are diminished.

⁶² According to the *Talmud* (*Shabbos* 152a) this refers to the ribs. In old age the skeletal structure which protects the vital inner organs begins to weaken and tremble.

⁶³ This refers to the legs which support the entire body. In old age they begin to shake. (*Rashi*)

⁶⁴ The teeth cease to function properly because in old age they are few. (*Rashi*)

⁶⁵ This refers to the eyes that look out through their sockets. (*Rashi*)

4. And the doors to the street will be shut,⁶⁶
when the sound of the grinding is low,⁶⁷
and when one will awaken
at the sound of a bird,
and muffled will be
the daughters [sounds] of song.⁶⁸
5. Also, when they will fear heights,
and terrors on the road,⁶⁹
and the almond tree will blossom⁷⁰
and the grasshopper will be a burden,⁷¹
and the desire will fail;
for, [in this manner,] man goes
to his eternal home,
and the mourners go about the streets.
6. Before the snapping
of the silver cord,
and the golden bowl is shattered;⁷²
and the pitcher is broken at the fountain,
and the wheel is shattered into the pit.
7. And the dust returns to the earth
as it was;
and the spirit returns to God
Who gave it.
8. Vanity of vanities says Koheles,
- ד. וְסָגַרְוּ דֶּלְתִּים בְּשִׁוֵּךְ
בְּשִׁפְלָה קֹל הַטְּחִנָּה
וְיִקּוּם
לְקוֹל הַאֲפֹר
וְיִשְׁחוּ
כָּל-בְּנוֹת הַשִּׁירִים:
ה. גַּם מַגְבַּעַת יִרְאֹוֹ
וּמַחְתָּתִים בְּדַרְךָ
וַיִּנְאֹצֵץ הַשְּׁקָדָךְ
וַיִּסְתַּבֵּל הַחֲטָבָךְ
וַיִּפְּרֹאֵר הַאֲכִיּוֹנָה
כִּי-הָלַךְ הָאָדָם
אַל-בֵּית עַזְלָמוֹ
וְסָבָבוּ בְּשִׂוֵּךְ הַסּוֹפְדִים:
ו. עַד אֲשֶׁר לְאַדְרָחָק
תַּכְלֵל הַכְּסָף
וְחַרְצֵן גָּלַת הַזְּהָבָב
וְתַשְּׁבָר בְּדַל עַל-הַמְּפֹועַ
וְגַרְצֵן הַגְּלָגָל אֶל-הַבּוֹרוֹ:
ז. וַיִּשְׁבֵּב הַעֲפָר עַל-הָאָרֶץ
פְּשָׁהִיה
וְהַרְוִימ פְּשָׁוֵב אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים
אֲשֶׁר נִתְּנָה:
ח. הַכְּלֵל הַכְּלִים אָמֵר הַקּוֹחַלָּת

⁶⁶ The apertures and organs of elimination cease to function properly. (*Rashi*)

⁶⁷ There is a slowdown in the function of the digestive system. (*Rashi*)

⁶⁸ The senses are diminished and the sound of song can no longer be appreciated. (*Rashi*)

⁶⁹ To the old man even a slight incline appears to be a high mountain and he is afraid. (*Rashi*)

⁷⁰ The almond is one of the fastest and earliest blossoming trees. It symbolizes old age which quickly overtakes him. (*Rashi*)

⁷¹ According to *Metsudas Dovid*, this is a metaphorical picture of the frailties of old age when he is so weak that even a grasshopper will seem like a burden on him.

⁷² The “silver cord” and the “golden bowl” refer to the spinal cord and the brain. They are referred to in these terms because of the vital function they perform. When the spinal cord is severed the nervous system is destroyed and deterioration of brain and body follow. (*Rashi*)

- all is vanity.
9. And besides that Koheles was wise,
he also taught the people knowledge;
he weighed and probed—
and adapted many proverbs.
10. Koheles sought to find words of delight;
and to write in a proper way
words of truth.
11. The words of the wise are like goads,⁷³
like well fastened nails [are the words]
of the masters of [learned] assemblies;
all were given from one Shepherd.⁷⁴
12. And, furthermore, my son, be admonished;
of making many books, there is no end,
and much study wears away the flesh.⁷⁵
13. In conclusion, after all has been heard;
fear God,
and preserve His commandments,
for this is the whole [duty] of man.
14. For every deed
God will bring into judgement,
and every hidden thing;
whether good or bad.
- (In conclusion, after all has been heard;
fear God,
and preserve His commandments,
for this is the whole [duty] of man.)
- הכל הבל: ט. וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁנִיה קְנֻלָת חֲכָם
עוֹד לְמִדְרוֹעַת אֶת־הָעֵם
וְאֶזְנָן וְחַקָּר
תְּקִזּוֹן מִשְׁלִים הַרְבָּה:
. בְּקַשׁ קְנֻלָת לְמִצְאָה דְּבָרִיחַפֵּץ
וּכְתוּב יִשְׁרָאֵל
דְּבָרִי אֱמָתָה:
יָא. דְּבָרִי חֲכָמִים כְּדָרְבָּנוֹת
וּכְמִשְׁמָרוֹת נְטוּעִים
בָּעֵלִי אָסְפּוֹת
נָתָנוּ מִרְעָה אָחָד:
יָב. וַיֹּאמֶר מִהְמָה בְּנֵי הַזָּהָר
עֲשָׂוֹת סְפָרִים הַרְבָּה אֵין קָל
וְלֹהֶג הַרְבָּה יִגְעַת בָּשָׁר:
יָג. סָוףּ ذָכָר הַבָּל נִשְׁמַע
אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יָרָא
וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו שָׁמֹר
כִּי־זֶה כָּל־הָאָדָם:
יָד. בַּיִּזְבְּלֵל־מִשְׁעָה
הָאֱלֹהִים יָבָא בְּמִשְׁפָט
עַל כָּל־נָעָלִים
אִם־טוֹב וְאִם־רָע:
סָוףּ ذָכָר הַבָּל נִשְׁמַע
אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יָרָא
וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו שָׁמֹר
כִּי־זֶה כָּל־הָאָדָם:)

⁷³ Just as the goad causes the cow to stay on the right path so do words of the Sages lead men along the right paths of life. (*Rashi*)

⁷⁴ This refers to the one Torah given by the One God through Moses, the one leader of the one nation.

⁷⁵ This refers to the study of non-Torah subjects which causes exhaustion without adequate compensation. Exhausting oneself in the study of Torah is of benefit in this world and in the World to Come.

Preface to Eichah

"David's song . . . even as I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me." (Tehilim, 23.)

The Book of Eichah chronicles the history of the ruination of the Bais Hamikdosh, the devastation of the sacred city of Jerusalem, and the anguish of a people decimated by its enemies and bereft of Sanctuary and homeland. It was written by the prophet Yirmiyahu, himself a victim of the national catastrophe, and it details his personal grief, as well as the suffering of the people. Moreover, the story of Eichah represents Jewish tragedy throughout the ages. Its sombre cadences are cantillated during the synagogue services on Tisha B'av, the anniversary of the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash and the day of national Jewish mourning.

Yet, aside from its message of grief and lamentation, aside, even, from the indomitable spirit of consolation and rebirth with which it closes—aside from these, the overarching theme of Eichah is the sense of the presence of a just and loving God at every turn in the sweep of history; and, indeed, the palpable nature of that Presence, even as the Babylonian legions wreaked ruin across the hills of Jerusalem, even as the Temple smouldered, even as the nation walked, with the prophet, in the valley of the shadow of death.

"God brought me grief . . ." "From a lofty place He hurled fire into my bones . . ." "God has placed me in the hands of those whom I cannot abide . . ." The soul of the prophet cries out with grief, yet he does not deny God, nor avoid Him. He senses Him, recognizing Him as the source of his very anguish, as he knows Him as the source of his life. And as He recognizes His loving role in granting life, He must acknowledge the justice of His retribution. "God is just, for it is I who flouted His word."

"Adonoy, return us to you . . . rejuvenate our days as in early times."

This verse completes the book, and encapsules, more than any other, the prophetic vision of the God of Eichah. His Presence, even in the valley, is with us. His benevolence has generated justice and retribution so that there may arise, from the ashes of the devastation, a new day of return and rejuvenation. Indeed, it is He who will originate the return, in response to the prophet's appeal, He who awaits the day.

The Book of Eichah thus takes its place, in the sacred canon of Judaism, as the voice of Jewish anguish and suffering, as the memorial to the nation's bygone glory, and as the document of eternal Jewish faith.

EICHAH איכה

Chapter 1

פרק א

1. How can it be¹ that she sits in isolation
the city teeming with people
has become like² a widow?

א. אֵיכָה | יִשְׁכַּחֲתָה בָּרוֹךְ

הָעִיר רֶבֶתִי שָׁם

הַיְתָה כָּאֱלֹמָנָה

רְבָתִי בָּגּוֹים שְׁרָתִי כָּמְדִינּוֹת

הַיְתָה לְמַסָּה

בָּלוֹ תְּבַקֵּחַ בָּלְלָה

וְדַמְעַתָּה עַל לְתָהָה

אַיִלְלָה מְנֻחָם מְכַלְּאַגְּבָה

כָּלְרָאַלְיָה בְּגָדוֹתָה

הַיְוָה לְהָלְאִיבִּים

ג. גָּלְתָה יְהוּדָה מְעָנֵי

וּמְרַבּ עֲבָדָה

הַיָּא יִשְׁבַּה בָּגּוֹסָם

לֹא מְצָאָה מְנוּחָה

כָּלְרַקְפִּיהָ הַשְּׁיִגְיָה בֵּין הַמְּצָרִים

ד. זְרַכִּי צְיוּן אֲגָלָות

מְקָלִי בָּאִי מָזָד

כָּלְשָׁעַרְיָה שְׂוֹמְמִין

פְּהַנִּיה נְאָנָחִים

בְּתוּלַתְךָ נָגָוֹת וְהִיא מַרְלָה

ה. הַיּוֹ אַגְּרִיהָ לְרָאָשׁ

Immense among nations, noble among provinces—

she has become a payer of tribute.

2. She weeps piteously in the night,
her tear on her cheek.

No one consoles her, among all her lovers.

All of her friends have betrayed her,
they have become her enemies.

3. Yehudah was exiled because of torment
and excessive toil.

[Even] when she dwelt among the nations,
she found no rest.

All her pursuers overtook her between the barriers.³

4. The roads of *Tzion* grieve,
for lack of festival visitors.

All her gateways are in ruins,
her *Kohanim* groan,

her maidens mourn; and she is embittered.

5. Her oppressors have become elevated.⁴

¹ The word אֵיכָה, "How can it be?", is identical with אַיְכָה, "Where are you?", the first words spoken by God to Adam after he had eaten the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. (*Bereishis*, 3:9.) This meant, "Because of your sin, you have forfeited your place in the Garden. Where, then, are you?" Indeed, Adam was subsequently banished from the Garden of Eden (*ibid.* vs. 23, 24.) The Jewish people, as well, forfeited their place in the sacred city of Jerusalem because of their sins. Thus, the prophet's opening word, אֵיכָה, suggests that God asks them, like Adam, 'Where are you?' (*Midrash*.)

² 'Like' a widow, but not actually a widow. Her 'husband'—The Shechinah—will eventually return. (*Rashi*.)

³ During the three weeks between the seventeenth day of Tamuz, when the walls of Jerusalem were breached, and the ninth day of Av, when the Temple was destroyed. (*Rashi*.)

⁴ Onkelos was a nephew of the Roman general Titus. He summoned his uncle from the dead by means of the occult, and asked his advice concerning the Jews. 'Persecute them,' Titus replied, 'and you will rise to greatness.'

<p>her enemies are at ease. For Adonoy has brought her grief for her excessive iniquity. Her young were taken captive before the oppressors.</p> <p>6. Gone from the city of <i>Tzion</i>, is all her splendor, her nobles have become like elk who could find no pasture, plodding powerlessly before the pursuer.</p> <p>7. Jerusalem, remembered the days of her [ruin] [which brought her] torment and lamenting; [and] all the treasures she had in early times.</p> <p>When her people fell into the hands of the oppressors and no one came to her aid, her enemies watched her, laughing derisively when she was curbed (from celebrating her holidays).</p> <p>8. Jerusalem has grievously sinned, and, therefore, has become a wanderer. All those who glorified her scorn her, for they have seen her degradation. She, too, is sorrowful, and has turned backward, (humiliated and ashamed).</p> <p>9. Her defilement is at her hem, she was not mindful of her end— so she plummeted astonishingly, with no one to console her.</p>	<p>אִיבֵּיה שָׁלֹׂו כִּי־יְהֹוָה הַזָּה עַל־רַב פְּשָׁעָיו עוֹלָה נָלְכוּ שְׁבִּי ?פְּנֵי־צָרָה: ו. וַיֵּצֵא מִבְּתִּצְוֹן כָּל־הַרְבָּה הַיּוֹ שְׁרִיקָה כְּאֶלְיָם לְאַמְצָאוֹ מִרְעָה וַיָּלְכוּ בְּלָא־כָּחַ לְפָנֵי רֹקְחָה: ז. זָכְרָה יְרוּשָׁלָם יְמִינָה עֲנִיָּה וּמְרוֹגֵץ כָּל מִתְמֻלֵּךְ אֲשֶׁר הַיּוֹ מִימֵי קָדָם בְּנֶפֶל עַמָּה בִּינְדָּצָר וְאַין עֹזֵר לָה רְאֵיתָ צְלִים שְׁחַקְוּ עַל־מִשְׁבְּתָה: ח. חַטָּאת יְרוּשָׁלָם עַל־כָּן לְנִיקָּה הַיִתָּה כָּל־מִכְבָּדָה הַזִּילּוּ כִּי־כָּרְאוּ עָרָמָה גַּם־הִיא גָּאנְחָה וְתַּשְׁבֵּ אַחֲרָה: ט. טְמַאַתָּה פְּשָׁוֵלָה לֹא זָכָרָה אַחֲרִיתָה וַתַּרְדֵּ פְּלָאִים אַין מַתָּחָם לָה</p>
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as it is written, "Her oppressors have become elevated." Onkelos ignored the advice, converted to Judaism, and composed the authoritative Aramaic translation of the Bible, "Targum Onkelos." (Gittin, 56:b.)

⁵ This refers to The Divine Presence, which left *Tzion* to accompany the exiles. This did not occur, however, until the young children were taken captive, as stated in v.5. It is in their pure, innocent company that the Shechinah resides. (Midrash.)

<p>Adonoy look at my suffering, for the enemy has gone to excess.</p> <p>10. The oppressor extended his hand over all her treasures.⁶</p> <p>as she witnessed peoples entering her Sanctuary concerning whom You commanded, “Let them not enter your community.”</p> <p>11. All her people are groaning, searching for bread.</p> <p>They have given away their treasures for food to keep their souls intact.</p> <p>Look, Adonoy, and take notice how I have become degraded.</p> <p>12. May this not happen to you, all who stray from the path.</p> <p>Notice, see if there is such agony like my agony, that has been visited upon me when Adonoy brought me to grief on the day He vented His wrath.</p> <p>13. From a lofty place He hurled fire into my bones, crushing them.</p> <p>He spread a net for my feet, thrust me back, placed me in ruins, [so that I] suffer throughout the day.</p> <p>14. The yoke of my iniquities is recorded in His hand. They have become interwoven, and have encumbered my neck. He has caused my strength to fail. God has placed me</p>	<p>רָאֵה יְהוָה אֶת־עֲנֵנִי כִּי הַגָּדוֹל אָוָבָן: . יְדָוַי פְּרַשׁ שָׂרָךְ עַל כָּל־מִחְמְקַיָּה כִּי־נָרְאָתָה גּוֹים בָּאוּ מִקְדְּשָׁה אֲשֶׁר צִיְתָה לֹא־יָבֹא בְּקָרְבָּל לְהָ: י.א. כָּל־עַמָּה נָגָנִים מִבְקָשִׁים לְחַם נָחָנוּ מִחְמְדֵיהֶם בָּאָכֵל לְהַשְׁיבָנְפַשְׁת רָאֵה יְהוָה וְהַבִּיטָה כִּי קִיְמִתִּי זָוֵלָה: י.ב. לֹא אָלִיכֶם כָּל־עֲבָרִי דָּרָרָה הַקִּito וּרְאוּ אִם־יִישׁ מִקְאֻוב בְּמִקְאָבִי אֲשֶׁר עַולְלָה אֲשֶׁר הַזָּגָה יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם תְּרוֹן אָפָה: י.ג. מִמְּרוֹם שְׁלֹחַ-אָשָׁש בְּעַצְמָתִי וַיַּרְאָה פָּרָשׁ בְּשַׁת לְרִגְלֵי הַשִּׁיבָנִי אָחוֹד נְתַנְנִי שְׁמָמָה כָּל־הַיּוֹם דָּנוּה: י.ד. נְשָׁקָר עַל פְּשָׁעֵי בְּיַדָּו יְשַׁתְּרַגּוּ עַלָּו עַל־צְוָאָרִי הַכְּשִׁיל פָּתָן נְתַנְנִי אָדָן</p>
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⁶ Over the most desirable of all objects, the Torah scroll. The Ammonite and Moavite invaders were aware that the Torah prohibits them from intermarrying into the Jewish community, ever after conversion. Disregarding more valuable spoils, they preferred to loot and burn the Torah scrolls in which the prohibition is inscribed. (Rashi.)

in the hands of those whom I cannot withstand.

15. God has trampled all my stalwarts in my midst,

He has proclaimed a gathering against me
to crush my young men.

[As with] a wine press, God has trodden
the maidens of the province of Yehudah.

16. For these I weep,
my eyes [lit. my eye, my eye] gush water,
for remote from me is a consoler

who can calm my soul.

My sons are devastated,
for the enemy has conquered.

17. *Tzion* spreads her arms,

there is no one to console her.

Adonoy has commanded, concerning Ya'akov,
that his oppressors surround him.⁷

Jerusalem has become despicable among them.

18. Adonoy is just,
for it is I who rejected His word.

Listen here, all you nations,
look at my torment;
my maidens and my young men
have gone into captivity.

19. I cried out to those who appeared to love me,
but they deceived me.⁸

My kohanim and elders expired in the city
while they searched for food for themselves,
to sustain their souls.

20. Adonoy, see how oppressed I am?

בַּיָּמִים לֹא-זָכֵל קָוֹם:

טו. סְלָה כָּל-אֲפִיבִי | אֶדְרַי בְּקָרְבִּי

גָּרָא עַלְיִ מַעַד

לְשָׁבָר בְּחֹורְבִּי

גַּת דָּנָךְ אֶדְרַי

לְבָתוּלָת בְּתִ-יְהוֹרָה:

טו. עַל-אֱלֹהִ | אָנָּי בּוֹכְבָּה

עִינִי | עִינִי יָדָה פְּיִים

כִּידְתָּק מִמְּנִי מַנְחָם

מִשְׁבֵּב נְפָשִׁי

הַנִּזְיָן שָׂמְמִים

כַּי גָּבָר אָוָבִים:

יז. פָּרֶשֶׁה צִיּוֹן בִּירְעָה

אֵין מַנְחָם לָהּ

צְוֹהָר יְהוָה לְעַקְבָּה

סְבִיבֵי צְרוּיוֹ

הַיְתָה יְרוֹשָׁלָם לְגַתְתָּה בְּגִינִּים:

יח. צְדִיק הוּא יְהוָה

כַּי פְּיָהוּ מְרִתִּיחִי

שְׁמֻעוֹדֵן כָּל-הָעָמִים

וּרְאוֹם בְּקָאָבִי

בְּתִולְתִּי וּבְחֹורְבִּי

הַלְּכֵד בְּשָׁבִי:

יט. גָּרָא תִּי לְמַאֲהָבָה

הַמָּה רְמֹנוּ

כְּהַנִּי זְקַנִּי בְּעִיר גְּנוּעָה

כִּידְבָּקְשׁוּ אֶלְלָלְלָמוֹ

וּשְׁיִבוּ אַתְ-נְפָשָׁם:

כ. רָאָה יְלֻנָּה כִּידְצָרְלִי

⁷ When the Jews settled in the diaspora, their enemies settled nearby and taunted and attacked them. (Rashi.)

⁸ The Ishmaelites, who caused many painful deaths by offering the famished captives what seemed to be food and drink. But the food was extremely pungent to the taste, and the flasks held nothing but foul air. When the food increased their thirst, they pressed the flasks to their mouths, and expired from the sudden intake of the foul air. (Rashi.)

My gut has shriveled, my heart is twisting inside me,
because of my rebelliousness.
Outside, the sword brings bereavement,
within, it is like death.

21. They have heard how I groan,
and no one consoles me;
all my enemies have heard of my calamity,
and rejoiced,
for it is Your doing.⁹

Bring the day that You proclaimed,
and let them resemble me.

22. Let all their evil come before You,
and do, to them, what You have done to me
for all my iniquity,
for I groan much, and my heart aches.

מֵעִי חָמֶר מָרוֹ נְהַפֵּךְ לְבֵי בְּקָרְבֵי
כִּי מָרוֹ מְרִיטִי
מְחוֹז שְׁפֵלָה הַחֲרֵב
בְּבֵית כְּמֹותָן:
כֹּא. שְׁמַעְיוֹ כִּי נָאנָה אָנִי
אֵין מְנַחֵם לִי
כָּל-אַזְבֵּי שְׁמַעְעוֹ רְעַתִּי
שְׁלֹשָׁו
כִּי אַתָּה עֲשִׂית
הַבָּאֵת יוֹם-קָרְנָאת
וַיְהִי כְּמַנִּי:
כֹּב. תָּבָא כָּל-רְעַתִּים לְפָנֵיךְ
וְעוֹלֵל לִמּוֹ בְּאַשְׁר עַולְלָתִי
עַל כָּל-פְּשֻׁעָי
כִּידְבּוֹת אַנְחָתִי וְלַבִּי דְּנוֹי:

Chapter 2 פרק ב

1. How can it be
that God, in his wrath, has cast a gloom
upon the city of *Tzion*,
that He flung from heaven to earth
the glory of Israel,
and did not remember His footstool¹⁰
on the day of His wrath?

2. God swallowed up mercilessly
every residence of Ya'akov.
He smashed, in His fury,
the fortifications of the province of Yehudah,
razing them to the ground.

א. אֵיכָה
יְלַיֵּב בַּאֲפֹו | אַדְנִי
אַח-בָּת-צִיּוֹן
הַשְׁלִיךְ מִשְׁמִימִט אָרֶץ
תִּפְאָרָת יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְלֹא-זָכֵר הַדְּמַרְגָּלִי
בִּיּוֹם אֲפֹו:
ב. בָּלָע אַדְנִי וְלֹא חִפְלֵב
אָתְ כָּל-גְּנוּזֹת יַעֲקֹב
הַרְסָה בְּעַכְרָתוֹ
מִכְצָרִי בְּתִיהְנוֹתָה
הַגִּיעַ לְאָרֶץ

⁹ You engendered their hatred by prohibiting me from dining or intermarrying with them. If you had permitted it, they would take pity on their own family members. (Rashi.)

¹⁰ The Temple. (Rashi.)

He desecrated the kingdom and its princes. ¹¹	חַלֵּל מְמָלָכָה וּשְׂרִירָה:
3. He tore down, in his wrath, all the power [lit. horn] of Israel.	ג. גַּרְעַ בְּחֶרְיָאָף כָּל קָרְן יִשְׂרָאֵל
He withheld His right arm in the face of the enemy.	הַשִּׁיבָא אֲחוֹר יִמְנִין מִפְנֵי אוֹיֵב
He ignited Ya'akov like a blazing flame which consumes on every side.	וַיַּבְעֶר בַּיְעָקָב כְּאֵשׁ לְהַבָּה אַקְלָה סְקִיבָּה:
4. He arched His bow like an enemy, set His right arm like an oppressor, and slew everyone that was a delight to behold.	ד. קָלָך קְשָׁתָוּ כָּאוֹיֵב גַּאֲבָב יִמְנִין כָּרֶר
In the tent of the city of Tzion He poured His fury like fire.	וַיְהִי רָגְבָּל מְחֻמָּדִי-עַזִּים בְּאָנוֹחַ בְּתִצְׁוֹן
5. God was like an enemy— He swallowed up Israel,	שְׁפָךְ כְּאֵשׁ חַמְתוֹן: ה. הָלִיה אֲדֹנִי כָּאוֹיֵב בְּלֹעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל
He swallowed up all her palaces, He destroyed its fortifications.	בְּלֹעַ כָּל-אַרְמָנוֹתָה שְׁחַתָּה מִבְצָרָיו
He magnified, in the community of Yehudah, suffering and lamentation.	וַיַּרְבֵּב בְּבָתִיהוֹתָה פָּאָנִיה וּזְאָנִיה:
6. He cut down His dwelling place like a garden, He destroyed His place of communion, ¹²	וַיִּחַם סְבָגָן שְׁפָכוֹ שְׁחַתָּה מִעָדוֹן
Adonoy caused to be forgotten in Tzion the Festivals and Shabbos.	שְׁבָח יְלֹוָה בְּצִוּן מוֹעֵד וּשְׁבָחָת
He scorned, in the fury of His wrath, the king and the kohein.	וַיִּנְאֹצֵן בְּנוּעַם-אֲפֹוּ מֶלֶךְ וּכֹהֵן:
7. God abandoned His altar, nullified His Sanctuary, delivered, into the enemy's hand, the walls of its palaces.	ז. צָנַח אֲדֹנִי מִזְבֵּחַ נָאֵר מִקְדָּשׁוֹ הַסְּגִיר בַּיְד-אוֹיֵב חוֹמָת אַרְמָנוֹתָה קוֹל נְתַנְנוּ בְּבִית-יְלֹוָה כְּיֻום מוֹעֵד:
They sounded a shout, in the House of Adonoy, like that of a festival day.	

¹¹ The Israelites, entitled the "kingdom of priests" [Shemos, 19:6] (Rashi.)

¹² The supremely holy, innermost, Kodesh Kodashim chamber of the Temple, set aside for communion with God [Sheimos, 25:22] (Rashi.)

8. Adonoy determined to destroy
the wall of the city of *Tzion*.
He set the course [of judgement],
and did not withdraw His hand from destroying.
He caused the fence and the wall to mourn
they were joined in misery.
9. Her gates sank into the ground,¹³
He demolished and shattered her bolts.
Her king and nobles are among the Gentiles,
without guidance.
Her prophets, also,
have not found vision from Adonoy.
10. They sit silently on the ground,
the elders of the city of *Tzion*,
they lift the dust to their heads,
gird themselves with sackcloth.
they lower their heads to the ground,
the maidens of Jerusalem.
11. My eyes are consumed with tears,
my gut is shrivelled,
my liver has spilled to the ground,
over the disintegration of my people,
when infants and nursing babies faint
in the streets of the city.
12. To their mothers they say,
'Where's grain [bread] and wine?',
as they lie, passed out like corpses,
in the streets of the city,
when their soul is poured out
- ח. חָשַׁבְתִּי לֹהֶה | לְהַשְׁחִיתָ
חוּמָת בְּחִצְיוֹן
נָתָה לָנוּ
לְאֵה שִׁיבֵּךְ יָדוֹ מִכְלָעַ
בְּאַבְלִתְלָל וְחוֹקָה
יְחִדָּנוּ אֲמְלָלָה:
ט. עָבָעוּ בְּאָרֶץ שָׁלִיקָה
אָפָד וְשָׁבֵר בְּרִיאִיקָה
מַלְּקָה וְשָׂרִינָה בְּגָוִים
אֵין תּוֹרָה
גַּם־נִגְבִּיאִיקָה
לֹא מֵצָאוּ חִזּוֹן מִילְהָוָה:
י. יִשְׁבּוּ לְאָרֶץ יְהֻמָּה
וְקָנִי בְּחִצְיוֹן
הָעֹלָוּ עַפְרָל עַל־רָאשָׁם
תְּגַרְוּ שְׁקָקִים
הַוּרִידוּ לְאָרֶץ רָאשָׁן
בְּחַולָת יְרוּשָׁלָם:
יא. כָּלָי בְּדָמָעֹות עַיִנִי
חַמְרָמָרָוּ מַעַיִן
נִשְׁפַּךְ לְאָרֶץ קְבָדִי
עַל־שָׁבֵר בְּחִצְעָמִי
בְּעַטְרָפָעָל וַיּוֹקֵךְ
בְּרַחֲכּוֹת קְרִינָה:
יב. לֹא מִתְּמַתְּמָתִים יְאַמְּרוּ
אִיהָ דָגָן וַיִּנְזַן
בְּהַחֲטָטָפָם פְּחָלָל
בְּרַחֲכּוֹת עִיר
בְּהַשְׁתְּפָעָק נְפָשָׁם

¹³ And were thereby preserved from falling into the hands of the heathen attackers. They were worthy of this because, when the *Bais Hamikdash* was dedicated by King Solomon, they opened to admit the sacred Ark. Or, because they were built by King David. (Rashi, from Midrash.) At the final redemption, they will be retrieved and restored to their place at the entrance to the *Bais Hamikdash*.

in their mothers' laps. אל-חַיִק אֶמְתָּם:

13. What testimony can I offer you,
to what can I compare you, city of Jerusalem?
to what can I liken you to console you,

O maiden, city of *Tzion*?

For your disintegration is as immense as the sea—
who can heal you?

14. Your prophets envisioned, for you,
falsehood and stupidity,
and did not expose your transgressions,
to bring you back from your waywardness.

They envisioned, for you,
prophecies of falsehood and vanity.
15. They clap their hands over you—
all those who travel along the way:
they hiss and shake their heads
over the city of Jerusalem.

Is this the city of which it was said,
"The perfection of beauty, delight¹⁴ of all the earth?"
16. They opened their mouths wide concerning you—

all your enemies—
they whistled, gnashed their teeth, and exclaimed,
"We swallowed them up?"

This is precisely the day we hoped for!
We've experienced it! We've seen it!"

17. God acted as planned.
He fulfilled His word
as decreed in the days of old¹⁵—
He destroyed without pity

ג. מֵהָאֲצֹרֶיךְ אֶל-חַיִק אֶמְתָּם:

מֵהָאֲרֻמָּה-לְךָ הַבָּת יְרוּשָׁלָם

מֵהָאֲשֹׁוֹה-לְךָ וְאַנְגָּמָךְ

בְּחַולָּת בְּחַצְיָון

כִּינְרוֹל פִּים שְׁבָרָה

כִּי יְרִפָּא-לְךָ:

יד. נְבִיאִיךְ תָּזוּ לְךָ

שְׂנוֹא וְחַפְלָה

וְלֹא-גָלוֹ עַל-עֲזֹנָה

לְהַשְׁיב שְׁבָתָה

וַיִּתְהַזּוּ לְךָ

מְשֻׁאוֹת שְׂנוֹא וְמַדְוִיחָם:

טו. סְפָלוֹ עַל-יךְ כְּפִים

כָּל-עֲבָרִ דָּרָה

שְׁרָקָל נִגְעָנוּ רָאשָׁם

עַל-בָּת יְרוּשָׁלָם

הַזָּאת הַעַיר שִׁיאָמָרֶךָ

כְּלִילַת יְפִי מְשׁוֹשׁ לְכָל-הָאָרֶץ:

טו. פָצָר עַל-יךְ פִּיהם

כָּל-אִיבִּיהָ

שְׁרָקוֹ וַיְתַהְרֹקְוּ-שָׁן אַמְרוֹ

בְּלָעָנוּ

אָה זֶה דָּיְם שְׁקֹוִינָהוּ

מִצְאָנוּ רָאִינוּ

י. עָשָׂה יְהֹוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמָם

בָּאָעָמְרָתוֹ

אֲשֶׁר צָוָה מִימִינָךְם

נָרָס וְלֹא חִטָּל

¹⁴ Business accounting, often distressing, was not permitted in Jerusalem, but was conducted in special offices outside the city proper (Midrash.)

¹⁵ In the Torah, which warns, "I shall punish you additionally sevenfold . . ." [Vayikra, 26:19] (Rashi.)

He gave joy to the enemy concerning you,
and enhanced the power of your oppressors.

וַיִּשְׁמַח עָלֶיךָ אֹוֹב

הָרִים קָרְנוֹ אַגְּרִיהָ:

18. Their hearts cried out to God.

יְהָ אֲצַעַק לְבָם אֶל-אַדְנֵי

O Rampart of the city of *Tzion*,
pour forth a river of tears day and night.

הַוְּלִידִי בְּנַחַל דְּמֻעה יוֹמָם וּלְלָהָ

Allow yourself no respite,
nor the pupil of your eye silence.

אַל-תִּתְּרַדֵּט בְּתִיעִינָה:

19. Rise, cry in the night, when the watches begin,
pour your heart out, like water, before God.

יְטַ . קַוְמִי | רֹאֵי בְּלִילָה לְרָאשׁ נְכָחָ פָּנִי אַדְנֵי
שְׁפָכֵי כְּפָלִים לְפָךְ נְכָחָ פָּנִי אַדְנֵי

Lift up your hands to Him
for the souls of your infants,

שָׁאֵי אַלְיוֹ בְּפִירָה

faint from starvation at the head of every street.

הַעֲטִיפִים בְּרַעַב בְּרַאשׁ כָּל-חוֹצֹות:

20. Adonoy, look, notice
upon whom you have visited this,
when women devour their own offspring,
infants who were lovingly attended.¹⁶

כ. רָאֵה יְהֻנָּה וְהַבִּיטה

When in the Sanctuary of God, was murdered¹⁷—
a *kohein* and prophet.

לְמַי עַזְלִילָת כָּה

21. On the ground, in the streets they lie,
young and old.

אַס-תְּאַכְּלָנָה נְשִׁים פְּרִימָט

My maidens and youths have fallen by the sword.

עַלְלִילִ טְפָלוֹים

You killed, on the day of Your wrath,
you slaughtered mercilessly.

אַס-יְהֹוָג בְּמַקְדֵּשׁ אַדְנֵי

22. You summoned, as if to a festive day,
my surrounding neighbors.¹⁸

פָּנָן וְנָבְיאָ:

There was no one, on the day of Adonoy's wrath,
who found refuge or survived.

כא. שְׁכַבָּו לְאָרֶץ חִצּוֹת

נָעַר וְזָקָן

בְּתוֹלָמִי וּבְתוֹרִי נְפָלוּ בְּתַרְבָּה

הַרְגַּת בְּיֹום אַפְּקָה

טְבַחַת לֹא חִמְלָפָה:

כב. תִּקְרָא כִּיּוֹם מֹועֵד

מְגֻונִי מִפְּבִיב

וְלֹא הָיָה בְּיֹום אַפְּיָה

פְּלִיט וְשָׂרִיד

¹⁶ Another interpretation: "Children of handbreadths." A mother measured her child each day by handbreadths. Whenever he grew, she donated his additional weight in gold to the Temple. In the end, she devoured him. (Rashi, from Midrash.)

¹⁷ This part of the passage is God's reply; 'Your suffering is deserved because the *Kohein* and prophet Zechariah, son of Yehoyada, was murdered in the Temple courtyard for admonishing the idolators. [Divrei Hayamim 2, 24:20.] (Rashi.)

¹⁸ To destroy me (Rashi.)

Those whom I attended lovingly and reared,
my enemy has annihilated.

אֲשֶׁר־טִפְחָתִי וּרְבִיתִי
אַיְכֵי כְּלָם:

Chapter 3 פרק ג

1. I am the man¹⁹ who has seen torment,²⁰
by the rod of His fury.
 2. He drove me, led me on, into total darkness.
 3. At me alone, He repeatedly swings His hand,
throughout the day.
 4. He rotted my flesh and skin, smashed my bones.
5. He constructed, against me,
encircling me with gall and bitter plants.
 6. He seated me in gloom like the dead of the world.
7. He fenced me in and I cannot go out.
He chained me heavily.
 8. Even when I cry out and implore,
He represses my prayer.
 9. He blockaded my roads with stone,
He made my paths crooked.
 10. He is a bear lying in wait for me,
a stealthy lion.
 11. He spread thorns across my roads,
He made me hurdle them. He devastated me.
 12. He arched His bow,
and positioned me as a target for the arrow.
 13. He aimed
the arrows of His quiver into my kidneys.
 14. I was ridiculed by all my people.
- א. אַנְיִ הָגָבֶר רָאָה עָנוֹי
בְּשָׁבֵט עֲבָרָתוֹ:
ב. אָוֹתִי נָהָג וַיְלַךְ חַשָּׁךְ וְלֹא־אֹורָה:
ג. אָנָּק בַּיִשְׁבַּ יְהֻסָּד יְדֹזָה
כָּל־הַיּוֹם:
ד. בְּלָה בְּשָׁרִי וְעוֹרִי שְׁבָר עַצְמוֹתִי:
ה. בָּנָה עַלְיִ
וַיַּקְרֵף רָאשׁ וַיַּחַלְאָה:
ו. בְּמַחְשָׁפִים הַוְשִׁיבָנִי קְמָתִי עַולְמָם:
ז. גָּדָר בָּעָדָן וְלֹא אָצָא
הַכְּבִיד נַחֲשָׂתִי:
ח. גָּם בַּי אָזַע וְאָשָׂע
שְׁתִּים תְּפִלָּתִי:
ט. גָּדָר דָּרְכִּי בְּגַזְוִית
נַתְּמִיבָּתִי עָוָה:
י. דָבָר אִירְבָּה הוּא לֵי
אָרְיִ בְּמִסְתָּרִים:
יא. דָרְכִּי סָוִר
וַיִּפְשַׁחַנִי שְׁמַנִּי שׁוֹמָם:
יב. דָנָךְ קַשְׁתָּו
וַיִּאַיְבָנִי בְּמַפְתָּרָא לְחַזָּה:
יג. הַבִּיא
בְּכָל־יְתִי בְּנִי אַשְׁפָחָתִי:
יד. הַיִּתְיִי שָׁחָק לְכָל־עָמִי

¹⁹ The other prophets merely prophesied that there would be torment—I experienced it. (Rashi.)

²⁰ The twenty-two verses in chapter 1, 2, and 4 follow the order of the alphabet, verse 1 opening with the letter **א**, verse 2 with the letter **בָּ**, etc., through **תָּ**. This reflects the extent of the people's iniquity, which encompassed the entire Torah, written in the twenty-two symbols of the alphabet. (Sanhedrin, 104:a.) Our chapter, which laments the prophet's personal suffering as well as that of the nation, consists of sixty-six verses, with three sub-verses devoted to each letter of the alphabet. (Rashi.)

the subject of their satirical songs throughout the day.	גִּנְעָם כָּל־הַיּוֹם:
15. He sated me with bitterness, ²¹ glutted me with bitter plants.	טו. הַשְׁבִּיעַנִּי בַּמְרוּם הַרְונֵי לְעַנָּה:
16. He ground my teeth on pebblestones, ²² He made me grovel in the dust.	טז. וַיִּגְבֶּס בְּחָצֵץ שָׂעִיר הַכְּפִישָׁנִי בְּאָפָר:
17. My soul despaired of peace, ²³ I have forgotten goodness.	יז. וַתִּזְנַחֲנָה מִשְׁלוּם נְפָשִׁי נִשְׁיָּתִי טוֹבָה:
18. I thought that my world was ruined, my hope from Adonoy.	יח. וַיָּמָר אָבֵד נְצָחִי וְחוֹתְלָטִי מִיהָנוֹה:
19. Remember my torment and my lament, the bitter plants and the gall.	יט. זָכֵר־עֲנֵנִי וּמְרוּזִי לְעַנָּה וַרְאָש:
20. When remembering, my soul is utterly dejected.	כ. זָכָר תְּזֵפֵד וּמְשֻׁתָּחֵלֵן נְפָשִׁי:
21. Still, I take this to heart, and, therefore, continue to hope:	כא. וְאַת אָשִׁיב אַל־לְבִי עַל־פָּנָן אַזְהָלִיל:
22. By the grace of Adonoy we have not perished, for His compassion is not ended.	כב. חָסֵן יְהֹוָה כִּי לֹא־תִּמְנוֹ כִּי לֹא־כָּלָז בְּחִמְיוֹן:
23. Each morning refreshed, Your faithfulness is immense.	כג. חַדְשִׁים לְבָקָרִים רַבָּה אַמּוֹנָתֶךָ:
24. ‘Adonoy is my portion,’ my soul declares, ²⁴	כד. חָלַקְיִי יְהֹוָה אָמָרָה נְפָשִׁי

²¹ This alludes to the bitter herbs eaten at the Passover *seder*, to commemorate the Exodus from the bitter persecution of Egypt. “Glutted me with bitter plants” refers to the destruction of the Temple and the exile. Indeed, the ninth of Av, the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple, and the first *seder* night always fall on the same day of the week. The anguish of a profound loss is always heightened by the memory of the joy that preceded it. (Midrash, Pesichta D’eichah Rabasi, 18, Yefeh Anal. Cf. Rema to Orach Chaim, 476:2. Also, Seder Kinos, “When I went out of Egypt—when I went out of Jerusalem.”)

²² God commanded the prophet Yechezkel to prepare a kneading tray to carry into captivity (Yechezkel, 12:3,) and to instruct the people to follow suit. The people, however merely scoffed. When they were eventually exiled, they were forced to knead their dough in small holes dug in the ground. Pebblestones fell into the mixture, causing the grinding of their teeth. (Rashi.)

²³ שָׁלוּם, “Peace” is one of the names of God. Because I despaired of Godliness, I forfeited goodness. (Lechem Dim’ah.)

²⁴ A great king, accompanied by his ministers and other officials, visited one of his provinces, and the provincial residents invited various members of the king’s retinue to visit with them. The wisest among them, however, declared that he would pay attention only to the king himself, as the others might be replaced, but the king was indispensable. Similarly, the idolaters worship the heavenly bodies, or other creatures who minister God’s will, but Israel declares “God is my portion,” proclaiming His absolute unity by reciting the Shema twice daily. (Midrash, 3:8.)

- I therefore hope to Him.
25. Adonoy is good to those who hope to Him,
to the soul which searches for Him.
26. It is good to hope, in stillness,
for Adonoy's deliverance.
27. It is good for man
to bear a yoke during his youth.
28. Let him stay alone and wait,
for He [God] has cast it upon him.²⁵
29. Let him place his mouth in the dust,
perhaps there is yet hope.
30. Let him proffer his cheek to his assailant,
let him be satiated with humiliation.
31. For God does not forsake forever.
32. Rather, should he [man] cause grief,
then He [God] is compassionate,
in accordance with His immense grace.
33. For He does not torment willfully,
nor cause men grief.
34. By crushing underfoot
all the captives on earth.
35. Or through the miscarriage of a man's justice
before the Supreme Being.
36. Or by aggrieving a man in his dispute—
God does not condone this.
37. Whosoever issued a declaration that took effect
when God did not command?
38. That did not emanate from the Almighty—
whether harmful or beneficial?
- עַלְכִּי אָוֹתֵיל לֹא:
כָּה. טֹוב יְהֻנָּה לְקֹנוֹ
לְנֶפֶשׁ אֲדָרְשָׁנוּ
כו. טֹוב וְיִחְיֶל וְדוֹקָם
לְתַשׁוּעָת יְהֻנָּה:
כו. טֹוב לְגָבָר
כַּי־יִשְׂחָא עַל בְּנֵעוֹרִיו:
כָּח. יִשְׁבֵב בָּקָד וְיִדְמֵם
כַּי נִטְלֵל עַלְיוֹן:
כָּט. יִתְּפַנֵּן בְּעַפְרֵל פְּיהָוּ
אוֹלֵי יִשְׁתַּקְוָה:
לָ. יִתְּפַנֵּן לְמִפְהָבוֹל חַיִּים
יִשְׁבַּע בְּחַרְפָּה:
לָא. כִּי לֹא יִזְנַח לְעוֹלָם אֲדֹנֵי:
לָב. כִּי אַסְמָדָה
וְרַחֲם
כְּרָכְבָּחָסְרוֹן:
לָג. כִּי לֹא עָבֵה מַלְפָנוּ
וַיַּגְּהֵה בְּנֵי־אֱלֹהִים:
לָד. קַדְבָּא תַּחַת רְגָנָנוּ
כָּל אֲסִירֵי אָרֶץ:
לָה. לְהֻתוֹת מִשְׁפְּט־בָּבָר
גָּגֶד פָּנֵי עַלְיוֹן:
לו. לְזִוְתִּי אֶתְמַבְּרִיבּוּ
אֲדֹנֵי לֹא רָאָה:
לו. מַיְּנֵה אָמֵר וּפְהָה
אֲדֹנֵי לֹא צָוָה:
לָח. מִפְּנֵי עַלְיוֹן לֹא חָצָא
הַרְעָוָת וְהַטּוֹב:

²⁵ This follows Rashi's translation. Targum interprets, "until He removes it from him." Let him accept the suffering as a means of absolution, until He—God—removes the sin from him.

39. What should a living man bemoan?
A man over his sins.²⁶
40. Let us examine our ways, scrutinize them,
and return to God.
41. Let us uplift our hearts together with our hands,
to the Almighty in heaven.
42. We have transgressed and rebelled,
and You have not forgiven.
43. You have covered Yourself in wrath,
and pursued us.
You slew pitilessly.
44. You have enveloped Yourself in the cloud,
so that no prayer would penetrate.
45. You made us seem like spittle, abominable
among the nations.
46. ²⁷They opened
their mouths wide concerning us—
all our enemies.
47. Terror, then the pit, were our lot,
ruin and disintegration.
48. Rivers of water stream from my eye,
over the disintegration of my people.
49. My eye flows copiously, and will not be stilled,
[it will flow] without pause—
50. Till Adonoy gazes intently and takes notice
- לט. מה־יְתַחֲזֹן אֶתְכֶם תִּרְאֵן:
גָּבָר עַל־חַטָּאת אָמֹן:
מ. נִחְפְּשָׂה דָּרְכֵינוּ וְנִנְחַלְתָּה:
וְנִשְׁגַּבָּה עַד־יְהוָה:
מָא. נִשְׁאָה לְבָבֵנוּ אֶל־כְּפָרִים:
אֶל־אָל בְּשָׁמִים:
מָב. נִחְנוּ פְּשֻׁעָנוּ וּמְלִינָנוּ:
אַתָּה לֹא סְלַחְתָּה:
מָג. סְפֻוָּתָה בָּאָף:
וּתְרַדְּפָנָה:
תְּרַגֵּת לֹא חַמְלָתָה:
מָד. סְפֻתָּה בְּעַנְןָן לְךָ:
מָעָכָבָד תְּפִלָּה:
מָה. סְתִּיחָה יְמָעוֹס תְּשִׁימָנוּ:
בְּקָרְבָּה עַמִּים:
מו. פְּצֹזָה:
עַלְיָנוּ פִּיהָם:
כָּל־אַיִבְנִינָה:
מו. פְּתַח נִפְתָּחָת קִיה לְנוּ:
הַשְׁאָת וְהַשְׁבָּרָה:
מָח. פְּלִגְיִי־פְּלִיטָה תְּנַדְּעֵנִי:
עַל־שְׁבָר בְּחִיעָם:
מָט. עַיִנִי נִגְרָה וְלֹא תְּرַמָּה:
מָאִין הַפְּגָgoּתָה:
ג. עַד־יְשִׁקְרִיפָה וְרָא יְלֹוָה

²⁶ The oral vocalization here, קָרִי, is the plural קָרָא, “his sins,” while the written text, בְּקָרִיב, spells the singular בְּקָרָא, “his sin.” Both versions are relevant. A man’s single sinful act invariably leads to other transgressions. He should thus particularly bemoan the single, original catalyst, as well as the others which followed. (Lechem Dim’ah.)

²⁷ The opening letters of the verses in our chapter follow the order of the alphabet (see fn.1.) Accordingly, our verse (as well as v. 16, ch.2) should begin with the letter י, which precedes the letter פ. Yet it begins with ב. This alludes to the spies sent by Moshe in the wilderness, who delivered a false, slanderous report concerning Eretz Yisrael, and dissuaded the people from entering the land. (Bamidbar, 13, 14.) The letter ב symbolizes peh, the mouth, the letter עֵין represents ayin, the eye. Since they mouthed what they had not seen, their mouths, ב preceded their eyes, ע. The report was delivered on the ninth of Av, foreshadowing the destruction of the Temple, which also occurred on that date, centuries later. Reflecting the spies’ report, Scripture also positions the ב before the ע. (Rashi from Sanhedrin, 104b.)

- מִשְׁמִים:
- from heaven. נא. עֵינִי עֹלָה
51. My eye has made me ugly, sorrowing לְפָנֶיךָ
 over my soul, מִפְלֵב בָּנוֹת עִירִים:
 more than all the inhabitants of my city.²⁸ ²⁹ נב. צַדֵּךְ אֶרְזִינוּ בָּאָפָר
52. I have been constantly trapped like a bird, אַיִלְכִּחְסָם:
 by those who are my enemies without cause. נג. אַמְתָּחָבְכָּר חֲרֵב:
53. They bound my life to the dungeon, וַיַּדְעָאָבָן כִּי:
 and cast stones upon me. נד. אַפְרִים עַל־רָאשִׁי
54. The waters rose over my head, אָמְרָתִי נְגֻרוֹתִי:
 I thought, 'I am cut off!'. נה. קָרְבָּתִי שְׁמָךְ יְהֹוָה
55. Still, I cried out Your Name, Adonoy מִבּוֹר פְּתָחִיותִ:
 from the abysmal dungeon. נו. קוֹלִי שְׁמַעַת אַל־פְּעָלָם אָזְגָּעָה
56. You have heard my voice. Do not shut Your ear לְרֹוֹתָתִי לְשֹׁועָתִי:
 to my [appeal for] relief, to my prayer. נו. קָרְבָּתִ בַּיּוֹם אַקְרָאָבָה
57. You came near on the day I called to You, אָמְרָתִ אל־תִּרְאָא:
 You said, 'Have no fear.' נח. רַבְתָּ אֶדְנִי רִיבִּי נְפָשִׁי
58. You fought, O God, the battles of my soul, גָּאָלָתִ חַיִּים:
 You redeemed my life. נט. רְאִיתָה יְהֹוָה עַזְתָּה
59. You have seen, Adonoy, how aggrieved I am— שְׁפָטָה מִשְׁפָטִים:
 administer justice for me. ס. רְאִיתָה בְּלִנְקָמָתִים
60. You have seen all their vindictiveness, בְּלִמְחַשְׁבָּתָם לֵי:
 all their plots against me. סא. שְׁמַעַת חַרְפָּתִים יְהֹוָה
61. You have heard their affronts, Adonoy כְּלִמְחַשְׁבָּתָם עַלְיִם:
 all their [insulting] thoughts concerning me. סב. שְׁפָטִי קָמִים
62. My opponents' conversation, וְהַגִּזּוּנִים:
 their unspoken thoughts, עַלְיִים כְּלִי־הַיּוֹם:
 are about me, throughout the day. סג. שְׁבָתָם וְקִימָתָם הַבִּיטה

²⁸ Yirmiyahu belonged to a family of *Kohanim*, chosen to serve in the Temple. When it was destroyed, their anguish was keener than that of the other families in the city. (Rashi.)

²⁹ Midrash interprets, '[Only I remained] of all the inhabitants of my city.' R' Shimon, son of Gamliel, said, 'There were five hundred schools in the city of Betar, the least of which numbered three hundred children.... The enemies wrapped each of them in his scroll and burned them. Only I remained, and I pronounce, over myself, "My eye has made me ugly in sorrowing over my soul, of all the inhabitants of my city." (Midrash, 3.)

I am the subject of their satirical songs.

64. Inflict punishment on them, Adonoy
as befits their deeds.

65. Break their hearts,
turn them into fools.

66. Pursue wrathfully, annihilate them
from under Adonoy's heavens.³⁰

אני מנוגינתם:
סִדְךָ תַשְׁיב לָהֶם גָּמֹול יְלֻוָּה

כְּמַעֲשָׂה יְרִיכָם:

סִתְּהָ תַפְּנִן לָהֶם מְגֻנָּת־לְבָבָם:

סִוְיָם תַּרְקֵרְבָּן וְתַשְׁמִילָם
מְתַחַת שְׁמֵי יְהֻוָה:

Chapter 4 פרק ד

1. How can it be that the golden glow has paled,³¹
that the splendid jewel is altered?

Sacred gems are spilled
at the head of every street.

2. The cherished children of Tzion,³²
who were evaluated in golden currency—
how can they be considered like flasks of clay,

the potter's handiwork?

3. Even the serpent

bares its breast to nurse its young,
yet the daughters of my people have become brutal,
like the desert ostrich.

4. The tongue of the nursing infant pasted
to its palate with thirst,
babies pleaded for bread,

but no one offered it to them.

5. Those who feasted on delicacies
were ravaged in the streets,

א. אֵיכָה יוּצַם זָהָב
יְשַׁנְּנָא הַכְּתָמָם הַטּוֹב

תַּשְׁפְּטָפְּכָנָה אַבְגָּנִירְקָשׁ
בָּרָאשׁ כְּלִיחּוֹצָותָן:

ב. בְּנֵי צִוְן הַיְלָדִים
הַמְּסֻלָּאִים פְּפַזְוָן

אֵיכָה נִחְשָׁבָו לְנַכְלִי־תְּרַשְׁׁשָׁה
מְעַשָּׂה יְהִי יוֹאָרָה:

ג. גַּם־תְּגִינִים

תְּלַצּוֹ שֶׁד הַיְנִיקָו גּוֹרִיןָן
בְּחַעַמִּי לְאַכְּדָר:

כִּיעָנִים בְּמַקְבָּרָה:

ד. דָּבָק לְשׁוֹן יוֹנָק
אַל־חַפּוֹ בָּצָמָא

עַזְלִילִים שָׁאָלוּ לְחַם
פְּנַש אָזְן לְהָם:

ה. הַאֲכָלִים לְמַעַרְיוֹם
נִשְׁמָנוּ בְּחִיצוֹת

³⁰ This alludes to Israel's arch oppressor, Amalek, of whom Moshe stated, "For I shall obliterate the memory of Amalek 'from under the heavens,' (Shemos, 17:14.) (Midrash.)

³¹ This is Yirmiyahu's elegy in memory of the slain king, Yoshiyahu (Divrei Hayamim 2, 35:25.) The "golden glow" was the saintly monarch's glowing countenance, the "sacred gems" his blood which spilled when enemy archers felled him with a fusillade of arrows. (Rashi.)

³² The Jerusalemites. How were they cherished? When outsiders married Jerusalemites, they would pay them their weight in gold. (Midrash.)

<p>those raised on richly colored brocade embraced the dungheaps.</p> <p>6. My people's transgressions surpassed the sins of S'dom,³³ which was instantaneously overturned, untouched by [human] hands.</p> <p>7. Her nazirites were more pristine than snow, more lustrous than milk. Those who appeared redder than pearls, who were hewn like sapphire—</p> <p>8. Have become blacker than charcoal in appearance, are unrecognizable in the streets. Their skin is shrivelled on their bones, having become dry as wood.</p> <p>9. Those who died by the sword were at an advantage over those who died of starvation, for they dripped, with burst bellies, from [eating] the produce of the fields.</p> <p>10. The hands of merciful women cooked their children. They became their food, when my people disintegrated.</p> <p>11. God spent His wrath, poured out His rage. He ignited a blaze in <i>Tzion</i>, and it consumed its foundations.³⁴</p>	<p>הָאָמְנִים עַלִי חֹלֶעֶת חַפְקוּ אֲשֻׁפְתּוֹת: ו. נִינְדֵל עַזְן בַּת-עַמִּי מִתְּשִׁאָת סְדָם הַקְּפִיכָה כְּמוֹרְגָע וְלֹא-תְּחַלֵּב בָּה יָדִים: ז. זָכָר נֹוִירִיךְ מַשְׁלָג צָהָר מַחְלָב אַרְמָנוּ עַצְמָמִים מִפְנִינִים סְפִיר גִּזְרָתָם: ח. חַשְׁךְ מִשְׁחָרֶל תָּאָרֶם לֹא נִפְרוּ בְּחִזְצָות צָפֵד עֹרְם עַל-עַצְמָם יְכַשֵּׁחַ הַיָּהּ כְּעַזְזָב: ט. טֹבְגִים נָיו חַלְלִי-תָּרָב מַחְלָלִי רְעֵב שָׁבָם יַזְבּוּ מִזְקָנִים מַתְּנוֹבֹת שְׂדֵי: י. יְדֵי נְשִׁים רַחֲמָנוֹת בְּשַׁלוּ יְלִדִין הַיּוּ לְבָרוֹת לִמּוֹ בְּשַׁכְּבָר בַּת-עַמִּי: יא. כָּלָה יְרֻחוֹ אֶת-חַמְתוֹ שְׁפָקָחָרְנוּ אָפֹו וַיִּצְחַדֵּשׁ בָּצִיּוֹן וְתַאֲכַל יִסְדָּתָה:</p>
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³³ Concerning S'dom, Scripture states, "...her sin is extremely grave" (Bereishis, 18:20,) concerning Yehudah and Binyamin, "...the iniquity of the house of Israel and Yehudah is extremely, extremely great." (Yechezkel, 9:9.) (Midrash.)

³⁴ "Song of Asaf, the nations have invaded your heritage..." (Tehilim, 79:1.) 'Song,' not dirge, or lament? This is compared to a king who built an elaborate wedding canopy for his son. When the prince became corrupt, his father destroyed the canopy, whereupon the prince's tutor burst into song. When asked why, he replied that he was joyful that the king had spent his fury against the canopy rather than the prince himself. Similarly, Asaf sang because God spent his fury against the *Bais Hamikdosh* rather than the Jewish people themselves. "God spent His wrath...He ignited a blaze in *Tzion*, and it consumed its foundations"—thereby sparing the Jewish people themselves. (Midrash, 4, Rashi to Tehilim, 79:1.)

- יב. לא הָמְלִינוּ מֶלֶכְיַ-אָרֶץ
 פֶּלֶן יִשְׁבֵּי תְּבָל
 כִּי יָבֹא צָר וְאוֹיב
 בְּשֻׁעֲרֵי יְרוּשָׁלָם:
 יג. מְחֻטָּאות נְבִיאִים
 עוֹנָת פְּהִנָּה
 הַשְּׁפָכִים בְּקָרְבָּה דֶּם צָדִיקִים:
 יד. גָּעוּ עֲוָרִים בְּחוֹצֹות
 נְגָאָלָה בְּדָם
 כְּלָא יוּכְלָוּ יַגְעַז בְּלְבָשָׂיהם:
 טו. סְרוּרָה טְמָא
 קָרְאָו לְמוֹ
 סְרוּרָה סְרוּרָה אַלְתְּפָעָז
 כִּי נָצָר גָּסְמָנוּז
 אָמְרוּ בְּגָזָם
 לֹא יַוְסִּפוּ לְגֹורָה:
 טו. פָּנִי יְהֹוָה חַלְקָם
 לֹא יוּסִיף לְהַבִּיטָם
 פָּנִי כְּתָנִים לֹא נָשָׂא
 זָקָנִים לֹא חָנָנוּ
 יז. עָזְלִינוּ תְּכִלִּנָה עִירֵינוּ
 אַל-עָזְרָתוֹ הַכָּל
 בָּצְפִּיתָנוּ אֲפִינָה אַל-גָּזָוי
 לֹא יוּשַׁעַ:
 יח. אָרוּ אֲצֹרִינוּ
 מֶלֶכְתָה בְּרַחֲבָתֵינוּ
 קָרְבָּקָאנָנוּ
 מְלָאו יְמִינוּ כִּי-בָא קָאנָנוּ
 יט. קָלִים חִיוּ רְזָפָינוּ
12. The kings of the earth did not believe nor did all the residents of the world [believe] that an oppressor or an enemy could enter the portals of Jerusalem.
13. For the sins of her false prophets, the transgressions of her *kohanim*, who spilled, within her, the blood of the righteous.
14. The blind slithered in the streets, filthied with blood, so that no one could bear touching their garments.
15. "Get away, you are contaminated!" they shouted at them. Get away, get away, don't touch!, for they were obscene and slithering. They said, among the nations, "They will no longer reside here."
16. In Adonoy's glaring anger, He dispersed them; He will no longer pay attention to them, because they did not venerate the *kohanim*, nor oblige the elders.
17. We persisted in longingly eyeing illusive reinforcements,³⁵ our yearning was for a nation that would never come to our aid.
18. They lurked behind our footsteps, so that we couldn't walk our streets, [we felt that] our end was near, our time was up, we were finished.
19. Our pursuers were swifter

³⁵ The Egyptian army. As they sailed to reinforce the Israelites, the Egyptian warriors noticed what appeared to be human remains in the water. They presumed that they were the remains of their ancestors, who had drowned while pursuing the Israelites. Thus reminded of the ancient enmity between the two nations, they returned to Egypt. (Rashi, from Midrash Yirmiyahu, 37:7.)

<p>than the eagles in the skies. They hounded us on the hills, laid ambush for us in the wilderness.</p> <p>20. The breath of our nostrils, Adonoy's anointed,³⁶ was ensnared in their pitfalls, when we thought that under His shelter, we would survive among the nations.</p> <p>21. Rejoice in gladness, city of Edom,³⁷ residing in the land of Utz— unto you, as well, shall the come to pass, intoxicating you till you vomit.</p> <p>22. You have been fully chastised for your sins, city of Tzion. He will never exile you again. He remembers your sins, city of Edom, your iniquity is exposed.</p>	<p>מִשְׁרֵי שָׁמַיִם עַל-הַהֲרִים דָלְקָנוּ בַּמִּקְבֵּר אֶרְבוֹ לְנוּ כ. רַיִם אֲפָנֵנוּ מִשְׁעִין יְהוָה גַּלְכָּר בְּשִׁיחִתּוֹתָם אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ בְּצָלָן גְּחִיה בְּגּוּיִם: כא. שִׁישִׁי וּשְׁמַחֵיל בְּחַדְרֹתָם יוֹשְׁבָת בָּאָרֶץ עַזֵּץ גַּם-עַלְיָק פָּעַבְר-פָּוֹס פְּשָׁפָנִי וּמְתַחְעָרִי: כב. פָּמָעָונֶק בְּחַדְצִיּוֹן לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַגְלוֹתָךְ פָּקָד עֲוֹנֶק בְּחַדְרֹתָם גְּלָה עַל-חַטָּאתֶיךָ:</p>
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פרק ה

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|---|---|
| <p>1. God, remember what happened to us;
look, take note of our degradation.</p> <p>2. Our heritage was subverted to strangers,
our homes to foreigners.</p> <p>3. We have been orphaned, there is no father,
our mothers are as widows.</p> <p>4. We pay to drink our own water,
our wood is acquired for a price.</p> <p>5. We are hounded around our necks,³⁸
we exhaust ourselves, but nothing remains for us.</p> | <p>א. זָכֵר יְהוָה מִהְדָּרְתָּה לְנֵנָה
הַבְּיִתָּה וּרְאֵה אֶת-חַרְפָּתָנוּ:
ב. נִמְלְתָנָה גְּנָפָה לְזַרְעוּם
בְּתוּנָה לְנִכְרִים:
ג. יְתּוֹמָם הַלִּינוּ וְאֵין אָב
אֶמְתַּחַנוּ כָּאַלְמָנוֹת:
ד. מִימִינֵנוּ בְּכֻסְף שְׂתִינֵנוּ
עַצְינוּ בְּמַחְרֵיכְאָבָא:
ה. עַל צְוָאָרָנוּ גְּרָכָנוּ
יַגְעָנוּ וְלֹא הַוְּחָלָנוּ:</p> |
|---|---|

³⁶ King Yoshiyahu. (Rashi. See fn.1)

³⁷ This is a prophetic reference to the Edomites' destruction of the second *Bais Hamikdosh* some five centuries later. Yirmihayu foresees their punishment, and the eventual return of the people of Israel, never to suffer exile again. (Rashi.)

³⁸ The hard labor is like a yoke around our necks. (Rashi.)

6. We extended a hand toward Egypt [for assistance,]
toward Ashur, to satiate us with bread.

ו. מִצְרַיִם נָתַנוּ יְדֵינוּ
אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁבְעַ לְחֶם:

7. Our forefathers sinned, and are no longer—
we must bear the burden of their transgressions.

ז. אֲבֹתֵינוּ חֶטְאָו וְאַיִלְמָן
וְאַנְחָנוּ עֲוֹנְתִיָּהָם סְכָלָנוּ:

8. Slaves rule over us,
and there is no redeemer³⁹ from their clutches.

ח. עֲבָדִים מִשְׁלָו בָּנוּ
פָּרָק אֵין מִיקָּם:

9. We gain our bread at the risk of our lives,
from the sword of the wilderness.

ט. בְּנֶפֶלְשָׁנוּ נָכִיא לְחַמְנוּ
מִפְנֵי חֶרֶב הַמִּדְבָּר:

10. Our skin is inflamed like a furnace,
from burning hunger.

י. עַוְלָנוּ קַתְגּוֹר גְּמָרוֹז
מִפְנֵי זָלָעָפָות רַעֲבָב:

11. Matrons were ravished in *Tzion*,
maidens in the cities of *Yehudah*.

יא. נְשִׁים בְּצִוּן עַזָּה
בְּחַלְתָּה בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה:

12. Noblemen were hung by the hands,
elders were accorded no reverence.

יב. שָׂרִים בִּינָם נָתָלוּ
פָּנֵי זָקְנִים לֹא נָהָרָא:

13. Youths were encumbered with millstones,
boys staggered with beams.

יג. בְּחוֹרִים טְהֻזּוֹן גַּשְׁלָאָה
גַּעֲלָרִים בָּעֵץ בְּשָׁלָה:

14. The elders vanished from the gates of justice,⁴⁰
young men from their halls of song.

יד. זָקְנִים מֵשְׁעָר שְׁבָתוֹ
בְּחוֹרִים מְגִינִּתָּם:

15. Joy has disappeared from our hearts,
our dance has turned to grief.

טו. שְׁבָתָה מִשּׁוּשָׁל לְבָנוּ
גְּהַפָּה לְאָכְלָ מְחֹלָנָה:

16. The crown of our heads⁴¹ has fallen.
Woe to us, for we have sinned.

טו. גְּפַלָּה עֲטַרְתָּה רַאֲשָׁנוּ
אוֹיֵנָא לְנוּ כִּי חֶטְאָנוּ:

17. For this our hearts ached,
over these, our eyes were dulled—

יז. עַל־זָהָה תְּהֵה דָּרוֹה לְבָנוּ
עַל־אַלְהָה חַשְׁכָּה עַיִינָנוּ:

18. Over Mount *Tzion* which was devastated,
foxes meandered across it.⁴²

יח. עַל הַר־צִוּן שְׁשָׁמָם
שְׁוּלָלִים הַלְכִירְבָּהּ:

³⁹ To redeem us. Another interpretation: "Her oppressors have become elevated" (1:5) teaches that anyone who oppresses Israel rises to greatness (see fn. there.) Thus, when lowly slaves rule over us, they become global potentates, and there is no redeemer for anyone on earth from their clutches. (Lechem Dim'ah.)

⁴⁰ The Sanhedrin (Targum.)

⁴¹ The *Bais Hamikdosh*.

⁴² When the Sages came upon the *Bais Hamikdosh*, they noticed a fox leaving the area which had housed the supremely sacred, innermost *Kodesh Kodashim* chamber. The others wept, but R' Akiva chuckled. They wept "Over Mount *Tzion* which was devastated, foxes meandered across it." R' Akiva explained why he chuckled. Scripture compares the testimony of Uriah and Zechariah (Yeshayah, 8:2.) Why are the two compared? Uriah prophesied

19. Adonoy, You shall endure for all eternity,
Your throne throughout the generations;
20. Why, then, O Eternal, do You forget us,
abandon us through lengthy days?
21. Adonoy, return us to You
then we shall repent.⁴³
Rejuvenate our days as in early times.
22. For, although
You may have considered us contemptible,
You have already vented the utmost fury against us.
(Adonoy, God, return us to You,
then we shall repent.
Rejuvenate our days as in early times.⁴⁴)
- יט. אַתָּה יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תִּשְׁבַּח
כִּסְאָךְ לְרוֹר וְדָרוֹ:
כ. לְמֵה לְנֶצֶח תִּשְׁבַּחֲנוּ
פָּעֻלָּנוּ לְאָרֶךְ יָמִים:
כא. הַשִּׁיבָנוּ יְהוָה | אַלְכִּי
וְנִשְׁיבָּה
תִּשְׁבַּח יְמִינֵינוּ בְּקָדְםֵינוּ:
כב. בַּי אָסֵר
מְאֹס מְאָסָתֵנוּ
קָצְפָת עַלְיָנוּ עַד־מָאָד:
(הַשִּׁיבָנוּ יְהוָה | אַלְכִי
וְנִשְׁיבָּה
תִּשְׁבַּח יְמִינֵינוּ בְּקָדְםֵינוּ:)

that *Tzion* would be plowed under, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount turned into a heap of rubble. (Yirmiyahu, 26.) Zechariah foretold that the streets of Jerusalem would yet teem with young and old (Zechariah, 8:4,5.) The comparison teaches that the two prophecies are interdependent. 'I rejoiced,' R' Akiva concluded, 'because, if Uriah's prophecy of destruction has been fulfilled, then Zecharia's prophecy of redemption shall also be fulfilled.' 'Akiva,' the Sages exclaimed, 'you have consoled us. May you be consoled by the footsteps of the herald [of redemption.]' (Midrash, 5:19.)

⁴³ God appeals to the Jewish people to initiate the process of repentance, "Return to me...then I shall return to you" (Zechariah, 1:3.) But the people appeal to God to begin, "God, return us to You, then we shall repent." (Midrash.)

⁴⁴ In order to close on a note of consolation, Scripture repeats verse 21, with its message of repentance and rejuvenation. (Rashi.)

Preface to Esther

Where is Esther alluded to in the Torah? "I [God] shall conceal ("Haster astir") my face on that day . . ." [Devarim, 31:18]. (Chulin, 139:b).

The Book of Esther recounts the drama of the Purim miracle, detailing the intrigue which jeopardized the entire Jewish people, and the subsequent events which culminated in their redemption. The story unfolds in the city of Shushan, capital of Persia, during the hiatus between the destruction of the First Temple, and the construction of the second. It is told simply and directly, and may be summarized in a few sentences. The Persian King Achashverosh replaced Queen Vashti with Esther, cousin of Mordechai. Afterward, Haman rose to the position of Prime Minister and demanded that everyone prostrate themselves before him, but Mordechai refused to comply. This enraged Haman, and he promulgated a decree authorizing the massacre of all the Jews. Esther interceded with the king, and he ordered Haman's execution. A new decree was issued, empowering the Jews to annihilate all their enemies. They did so, Mordechai was appointed to Haman's position of power, and the anniversary of the Jewish victory was proclaimed as the Purim holiday.

Yet, for all its lucidity and clarity of presentation, Megillas Esther represents a notable departure from Scriptural narrative. For, of all of the Sacred literature concerned with Jewish history, the Book of Esther alone utterly neglects the role of Providence in the events it portrays, failing, altogether, to even mention the name of God.

Why does Scripture here omit the role of Providence, but include it in great detail throughout the remaining sacred writings? The classical commentaries explain: because of the distinction between the nature of the Purim miracle, and the miracles which preceded it, from the time of the Exodus and the revelation at Sinai, until the close of the era of the first Temple. Then, Providence revealed itself through the miracle. The Presence of God in mortal affairs was plainly evident. The Scriptural literature itself reflects this pattern of a visible Providence, and the effect of the Hand of God is clearly detailed throughout the five *chumashim* and the works of the prophets, ending with the destruction of the Temple. With the close of the Temple and prophetic eras, however, the age of the revealed Presence ended as well. The role of Providence in Jewish history would now be concealed behind the cloak of apparently natural events.

It was then that the story of Esther took place, as suggested in the Torah, "I shall conceal myself on that day"—"Haster Astir". The truly miraculous events which led to the redemption—Esther's rise to prominence, Mordechai's rescue of the king, the king's bizarre reversal from reverent admiration of Haman to murderous rage against him—were arranged by the guiding force of Providence, concealed below the surface of the flow of history. This pattern is followed in the text of the Book of Esther, where the story is presented without overt reference to Divine intervention, reflecting the concealed nature of the intervention itself.

It is this unique teaching which emerges from the study of Megillas Esther: God has not abandoned the Jewish people, but has rather concealed His protective influence over Jewish destiny; a Jew is never alone. He is borne by the invisible power of a Providence guiding the flow of history towards ultimate redemption and restoration.

אֲשֶׁר**Chapter I פרק א'**

1. It was in the days of Achashverosh—¹
 this was the Achashverosh
 who reigned from Hodu to Cush—
 one hundred and twenty-seven colonies.

2. In those days,
 when king Achashverosh had established himself²
 on his imperial throne,
 in the capital city of Shushan.

3. In the third year of his reign,
 he tendered a feast for all his ministers and servants,
 the forces of Persia and Media,
 the nobles and the colonial ministers, in his presence.

4. Where he exhibited
 the affluence and eminence of his kingdom,
 the glory and splendor³ of his magnificence;
 for many days—

one hundred and eighty days.

5. At the completion of these days,
 the king tendered, for all the people
 present in the capital city of Shushan,

א. וַיְהִי בִּימֵי אַחַשְׁוֹרֹשׁ
 הַוָּא אַחַשְׁוֹרֹשׁ
 הַמֶּלֶךְ מִהְדוּ וְעַד-פּוֹזֶשׁ
 שְׁבֻעַ וְעַשְׂלִים וּמִאָה מִדְינָה:
 ב. בִּיקְרִים הַהָם
 כְּשַׁבְתָּה | הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֹרֹשׁ
 עַל כִּסֵּא מֶלֶכְותָו
 אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁוְעֵן הַבִּיקָרָה:
 ג. בְּשַׁנְתָה שְׁלֹשׁ לְמִלְכָו
 עַשְׁתָה מִשְׁתָה לְכָל-שְׂרוֹ וְעַבְדָיו⁴
 חִיל | פָּרָס וּמָרִי
 קְפָרָתִים וּשְׂרִי קְפָרִינּוֹת לְפִנֵיו:
 ד. בְּנָרָאוֹתָו
 אַת-עַשְׁר בְּבּוֹד מֶלֶכְותָו
 וְאַת-זִיכָר תְּפִאָרָת גְּדוּלָתוֹ
 יְמִים רַבִּים
 שְׁמוּנִים וּמִאָת יָמִים:
 ה. וּבְמַלְוָאת | הַיָּמִים הָאֱלָה
 עַשְׁתָה הַאֲלָךְ לְכָל-הָעָם
 הַגְּמַצְאִיט בְּשַׁוְעֵן הַבִּיקָרָה

¹ During the seventy year hiatus between the destruction of the first Temple by the Babylonians, and the restoration of the second Temple. The Babylonians invaders were themselves conquered by the Persians and Achashverosh succeeded the emperor Koresh to the Persian throne. (Rashi.)

² Another interpretation: "When the king gained his composure"—thinking that the Temple would never be rebuilt, and the Jews would remain under his dominion. Until then, however, he was deeply agitated by Yirmiyahu's prophecy that God would remember the Jews "when seventy years of Babylon are completed." (Yirmiyahu, 29:10.) The king calculated erroneously, and concluded that the seventy years were now complete, with the Temple still in ruins, and the Jews under his absolute dominion. He celebrated by supplying the revelers at the feast with vessels confiscated from the Temple (Megillah, 11:b.)

³ This alludes to the splendid priestly vestments, taken from the Temple, which the king wore at the feast. (Megillah, 12:a.)

from the greatest to the least significant,
a feast for seven days,
on the grounds of the garden in the royal orchard.

לְמִגְוָל וְעַד־קָטָן
מִשְׁתָּחָה שֶׁבְעַת יְמִים
בְּחַדֵּר גְּתַת בֵּין הַמֶּלֶךְ:
ו. חָור |
כְּרָפָס וְתַכְלָת
אֲחֹז בְּחַכְלִי־בּוֹז
וְאַרְגָּמָן
עַל־גָּלִילִי בְּסָף וְעַמּוֹדִי שָׂש
מִטּוֹת | זְהָב וְכָסָף
עַל רָצֶף בְּהַטְּנָשָׁש
וְנֶר וְסְנָרָת:
ז. וְהַשְׁקוֹת בְּכָלִי זָהָב
וְכָלִים מְפֻלִּים שׁוֹנִים
וְגַיִן מֶלֶכְתָּה בְּכִינְד הַמֶּלֶךְ:
ח. וְהַשְׁתִּיה בְּקַתְתָּה אַיִן אָנוּ
כְּיִכְּנָן | יְפָד הַמֶּלֶךְ
עַל כְּלִיבָּב בַּיְתָו
לְעַשְׂוֹת כְּרִצְוֹן אִישׁ־אִישׁ:
ט. גָּם וְשָׁתְתִי הַמֶּלֶכה
עַשְׂתָּה מִשְׁתָּחָה נְשִׁים
בֵּית הַמֶּלֶכְתָּה אֲשֶׁר לְמַלְךָ אַמְשְׁרוֹשׁ:
י. בִּיּוֹם הַשְׁבִּיעִי
כְּטוּב לְכִבְּהַמֶּלֶךְ בֵּין
אָמֵר לְמַהוּמָן בְּזַהָּא חַרְבוֹנָא בְּגַנְתָּא
וְאַבְגָּמָא וְתָר וְכְרָפָס שֶׁבְעַת הַסְּרִירִים
הַמְשֻׁרְתִּים אַחֲ־פָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲרְוֹשׁ:
יא. לְהַכְּבִּיא אַחֲ־שְׁתִי הַמֶּלֶכה לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
בְּכָתָר מֶלֶכְתָּה
לְהַרְאָות הַעֲמִים וְהַשְׁרִים אַחֲ־יִפְּחָה
כִּיטּוּבָה מְרָאָה קַיָּא:

6. [There were] pure white drapes,
fine woolen cushions, bluish emerald *techeiles* wool,
brocaded with strands of linen
and mauve, woolen *argaman* threads,
over silver columns and marble pillars;
gold and silver couches
on a floor inlaid with rare gems and marble,
set in parallel circular patterns.

7. As for drinking; golden utensils,
other sundry vessels,⁴
and plenty of royal wine, with majestic largesse.

8. The drinking was proper, with no coercion;
for the king had so basically instructed
all his palace officials—

to satisfy each individual's desire.

9. Queen Vashti, as well,
tendered a feast for women,
at king Achashverosh's palace.

10. On the seventh day,
when the king was exhilarated by drink,
he instructed Mehuman, Bizesa, Charvona, Bigsa,
Avagsa, Zeisar, and Charkas, the seven servants
who attended King Achashverosh's person—

11. to present Queen Vashti before the king
[clad] in the royal crown,
to flaunt her beauty before the nations and the ministers,
for she was of beautiful appearance.

⁴ Taken from the Temple. (Megillah, 12:a.)

12. Queen Vashti refused to attend⁵ as ordered by the king through the servants—and the king was extremely angered, his fury consumed him.

13. The king consulted the sages who were well versed in the affairs of the times, for the king would thus place matters before all who were versed in procedural and legal concerns.

14. Most intimately associated with him, were Karshena, Sheisar, Admasa, Sarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memuchan, the seven ministers of Persia and Media who were in personal contact with the king, and who occupied the highest seats of power in the kingdom.

15. Concerning the proper procedure to follow with Queen Vashti, since she did not do as directed by King Achashverosh through the servants.

16. Memuchan⁶ spoke before the king and the ministers: "It is not only his majesty that Vashti has aggrieved, but all the ministers and all the peoples in all of King Achashverosh's colonies.

יב. וַיִּמְאַן הַמֶּלֶךְ וְשֹׁתִי לְבוֹא בְּרַכְרַכְרַת הַפָּלָךְ אֲשֶׁר בִּינְדַּת הַסְּרִיקִים וַיַּקְצַּח הַפָּלָךְ מְאֹד וַיַּחֲמֹתֵה בְּעַרְבָּה בָּהּ

יג. וַיֹּאמֶר הַפָּלָךְ לְחַכְמִים יְדֻעֵי הַעֲתָה כִּי־גָם דִּבֶּר הַמֶּלֶךְ לִפְנֵי כָּל־יִדְעֵי קְתַת זְדִינָה יְדַעַּת וְהַקְרָב אֲלֵינוּ

פְּרַשְׁנָא שְׁתַר אַרְמָמָחָת תְּרִשְׁישׁ מְרַס מְרַסְנָא מִמְוֹכָן שְׁבָעַת שְׁרֵי | פְּרָס וּמְרָי רָאֵי פָּנֵי הַפָּלָךְ הַיְשָׁבִים רְאַשְׁנָה בְּמִלְכִוָּה טו. קְתַת מַה־לְּעָשֹׂות בְּמִלְכָה וְשֹׁתִי עַל | אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָשָׂתָה אַחַת־מְאַמֵּר הַפָּלָךְ אַחְשְׁוֹרֹשׁ בִּינְדַּת הַסְּרִיקִים:

טו. וַיֹּאמֶר מִמְוֹכָן לִפְנֵי הַפָּלָךְ וְהַשְׁלִירִים לֹא עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבָדוֹ עֲוֹתָה וְשֹׁתִי הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי עַל־כָּל־הַשְׁלִירִים וְעַל־כָּל־הָעָמִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מִרְינוֹת הַפָּלָךְ אַחְשְׁוֹרֹשׁ:

⁵ She was as lewd as her husband, and would have attended, but she was disfigured by leprosy. This was by providential design, to punish her for humiliating Jewish women. (Rashi, from Megillah, 12:b.)

⁶ This was Haman. He is listed last in verse 14, indicating that he was the least of the ministers. But he characteristically vaulted to a position beyond his worth, and brazenly expressed his opinion first, as if he were the king's chief advisor. (Megillah, 12:b.)

17. For the affair of the queen will extend to all women, so that they will disparage their husbands, saying, 'King Achashverosh commanded that Queen Vashti be brought before him, but she never came!'

יז. כי ייָצָא דְּבָרֵה מֶלֶךְ
עַל כָּל־הָעָשִׂים
לְהַבָּנוֹת בְּעַלְיָהּ בְּעִגְיָהּ
בְּאָמָרָם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ אָמַר
לְהַבְּיא אֶת־וָשְׁתִי הַמֶּלֶךְ לְפָנָיו
וְלֹא־בָּאתָה:

ית. וְהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה

תָּאָמְרָנָה | שְׁרוֹת פְּרָסִיזְמָן
אֲשֶׁר שְׁמָעוֹ אֶת־דִּבְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

לְכָל שָׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְכָל־בְּנֵי וְגַם־אַנְשָׁי:

יט. אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טֹוב

יֵצֵא דְּבָרֵי מֶלֶכְתָּו מִלְּפָנָיו

וַיַּחֲתַב בְּרִתִי פְּרָסִיזְמָן
וְלֹא־יַעֲבוֹר

אֲשֶׁר לְאַתְּבָוָא וְשָׁפֵן

לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ

וּמְלֻכָּתָה יְמִינָן הַמֶּלֶךְ

לְרֹעֲנָה הַטּוֹבָה מִמְּבָה:

כ. וּנְשָׁמֵעַ פְּתַחַם הַמֶּלֶךְ

אֲשֶׁר־יִעֲשֶׂה

בְּכָל־מֶלֶכְתָּו

כִּי רְבָה הָיָה

וְכָל־הָעָשִׂים יִתְּנוּ יָקָר לְבַעֲלֵיָהּ

לְמִגְרוֹל וְעַד־קְטוֹן:

כא. וַיִּתְּבַּחֲרֵר בָּעִינִי הַמֶּלֶךְ

then all the wives will honor their husbands,

from the greatest to the least significant.'

21. The advice was viewed favorably by the king

⁷ Ordering Vashti's execution. And let it become law that any woman guilty of a similar offense against her husband shall be executed. (Rashi.)

⁸ When king Shaul spared some of Amalek's livestock and failed to execute the Amalekite king Agag, the prophet Shmuel declared that he had forfeited his throne, which God would bestow "on a companion of yours who is superior to you" (Shmuel 1, 25:2). By the identical phrase, "let the king bestow her regency 'on a companion of hers who is superior to her,'" the throne was restored to Shaul's descendant Esther, who was chosen as queen when Vashti was deposed (Midrash, 4:9). Indeed, Esther was instrumental in bringing Agag's descendant, Haman the Agagite, to the gallows, thereby rectifying the damage which evolved from her ancestor's misjudgment.

and his ministers,
and the king acted
on Memuchan's recommendation.

וְנִשְׁרִים
וַיַּעֲשֵׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ
פָּדָר מִמּוֹקָן:
כְּבָ. וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים
אַלְכְּלִ-מָּרִינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ
אַלְמָדִינָה וּמִדִּינָה כְּכֹתֶבֶת
וְאַלְעַם נָעַם כְּלָשׂוֹן
לְהִיּוֹת כָּלִ-אִישׁ
שָׁרֵר בָּבִיתוֹ
וּמְדָבֵר כְּלָשׂוֹן עָמוֹ:

22. He dispatched scrolls
to all of the king's colonies—
to each and every colony in its own script,
and each and every people in their own language—
instructing that every husband
be dominant in his home,
and that his people's language be the one spoken.

פרק ב Chapter 2

1. After these events,
as King Achashverosh's ire dissipated,
he remembered Vashti
and how she had acted,
and the decree against her.⁹
- בְּשַׁעַךְ חֲמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ
זָכַר אַחֲנָשְׁתִּי
וְאַתְּ אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂתָה
וְאַתְּ אֲשֶׁר-גִּנְגַּן עָלָיהָ:
2. The king's youthful valets suggested:
“Let them seek, for his majesty,
young maidens of beautiful appearance.
- ג. וַיֹּאמְרוּ נָעֲרִי-הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁרָתוֹ
יַבְקַשׁוּ לְמֶלֶךְ
נָעֲרוֹת בְּחוּלוֹת טֻבּוֹת מֶרְאָה:
3. And let his majesty appoint officials
in all the colonies of his kingdom,
who shall assemble all the young maidens
of beautiful appearance
at the capital city of Shushan,
in the harem residence,
in the custody of his majesty's enunuch¹⁰ Heige,
the harem overseer,
- ג. וַיִּפְקַד הַמֶּלֶךְ פָּקִידִים
בְּכָל-מִדְינּוֹת מֶלֶכְוֹתָיו
וַיַּקְבֵּץ אֶת-כָּל-נָעֲרָה בְּחוּלָה
טוּבָת מֶרָאָה
אַלְשׁוֹן הַבִּירָה
אַל-בֵּית הַגְּשִׁים
אַל-יָד הַגָּא סְרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ
שָׁמֵר הַגְּשִׁים

⁹ He realized that her demurral was justified, and the decree against her unmerited. Why, indeed, was her apparently undeserved execution ordained by Providence? Because she persuaded Achashverosh to prohibit the restoration of the Sanctuary in Jerusalem, as it had been destroyed by her grandfather, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. (Midrash, 5:2.)

and let them be supplied with their cosmetics.

4. And the young woman

whom his majesty views with approval

shall reign in place of Vashti."

This suggestion was viewed favorably by the king,

and he implemented it.

5. There was a Yehudite man¹¹

in the capital city of Shushan.

His name: Mordechai, son of Yair, son of Shim'i,

son of Kish, a Binyaminite man.

6. Who was exiled from Jerusalem

with the captives exiled

with Yechaniah, king of Yehudah,

driven into exile by

Nevuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.¹²

7. He was the foster parent of Hadassah—

this was his cousin Esther—

as she had neither father nor mother.

The young woman

was beautiful in form and appearance,

and when her father and mother died,

Mordechai adopted her as a daughter.¹³

8. Now it happened,

וְנַחַן פְּמַרְקִין:

ד. וְנַגְעָרָה

אֲשֶׁר חִיטֵּב בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

תְּמֶלֶךְ פָּתַח וְשִׁתִּי

וַיִּטְבֹּל הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

וַיַּעֲשֶׂה כֵּן:

ה. אִישׁ יְהוָדִי הַיִהְה

בְּשִׁישָׁן הַבְּרִירָה

וְשָׁמוֹ מְרֻדְכִּי בֶּן יָאִיר בֶּן שְׁמָעוּי

בֶּן־קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי:

ו. אֲשֶׁר הַגָּלָה כִּירּוֹשָׁלָם

עִם יְכָנָנָה מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה

אֲשֶׁר הַגָּלָה

נְבוּכְנָצָר מֶלֶךְ בְּבָלָה:

ז. וַיָּהֵי אֶלָּן אֶת־הַדָּפָה

הַיָּא אָסְטָר בְּתִידָּוָה

כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאָם

וְנַגְעָרָה

יְפַת־חָאָר וְטוֹבָת מֶרָאָה

וּכְמֹתָה אֲבִיכָּה וְאֶחָה

לְקַחַת מְרֻדְכִּי לוֹ לְבָתָה:

ח. וַיְהִי

¹⁰ Both Heige and Sha'ashgaz (v.14) were eunuchs. (Midrash, 5:3.)

¹¹ All the Jews who accompanied the kings of Yehudah into the Babylonian exile were indentified as Yehudim. Mordechai, however, was actually a member of the tribe of Binyamin. (Rashi.) Or, יהוד is suggestive of יהוד, "unification." Mordechai would publicly unify the name of God by refusing to bow before Haman, who had emblazoned his breast with an idolatrous image. (Midrash, 6:2.)

¹² To Babylon. When the Persians vanquished the Babylonians, and King Koresh granted the Jews permission to reconstruct the Temple, Mordechai returned to the Holy Land to join the reconstruction effort. (Ezra, 2:2.) Then, when Koresh rescinded the permit (Ibid, 4:24,) Mordechai journeyed to the capital city of Shushan to attempt to persuade the king to renew the grant (Ralbag to Ezra, 2:2. Cf. Targum Yonasan here.) It is in the period of Koresh's successor, Achashverosh, that the Purim episode unfolds.

¹³ According to the Rabbis, not בָּתָה, "as a daughter," but בָּתָה, "as a home"—i.e., Mordechai took her as a wife. (Rashi.)

when the king's edict, his bylaw, was made public, and a large number of young women were gathered at the capital city of Shushan, in the custody of Heigai,

that Esther was brought to the royal palace, in the custody of Heigai, the harem overseer.

9. He viewed the young woman favorably, and she gained his benevolence.

He eagerly delivered her cosmetics and her clothing allowance to her also the seven special maidservants assigned to her from the royal household staff.

He favored her and her maidservants with preferential treatment at the harem residence.

10. Esther did not reveal [the identity of] her people or her heritage,

since Mordechai had instructed her not to reveal it.¹⁴

11. Each and every day, Mordechai would pace before the courtyard of the harem residence, to apprise himself of Esther's welfare,¹⁵ and of what would be done with her.¹⁶

12. When the time arrived for each of the young women to be admitted to King Achashverosh,

בְּהַשְׁמָעַ דְּבָרֵה-פָּלָךְ וְדָתָו
וּבְהַקְּבִּץ נְשָׂרוֹת רֶבֶּזֶת
אַל-שָׁוֹשָׁן כְּבִירָה
אַל-יָיְךְ הָגִי
וַתְּלַקְּחַ אַסְתָּרָה אַל-בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ
אַל-יָיְךְ הָגִי שָׁמֵר הַגְּשִׁים:
ט. וּמִטְּבַבְּ הַגְּעֻרָה בְּעִינֵיכְךָ
וּמִשְׁאָחָסֵד לְפָנָיו
וַיַּבְּהֵל אֲת-מִקְרָאֵיכָה
וְאֲת-מִנוֹתָךְ לְחַתְּלָה
וְאֲת שְׁבָעָה גְּנַעֲרוֹת הַרְאִיוֹת
לְחַתְּלָה מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ
וַיַּשְׁגַּנְהָ וְאֲת-גְּעַרְוָתָךְ
לְטוֹב בֵּית הַגְּשִׁים:
. לְאַהֲגִידָה אַסְתָּר אֲת-עַמָּה
וְאֲת-מִזְלָתָה
כִּי מְרַדְכִּי צֹנָה עַלְלָה
אֲשֶׁר לְאַתְגִּיד:
יא. וּבְכָל-יָמָם וּבָבָבָם
מְרַדְכִּי מִתְהַלֵּךְ לְפָנֵי חָצֵר
כִּי-חַדְבָּשִׁים
לְדוֹעַת אֲחַ-שְׁלוּם אַסְתָּר
וּמְהַיְּעַשָּׂה בָּהּ:
יב. וּבְהַגְּעַעַת חֹרֶב
גְּעֻרָה וְגְעַרָּה
לְבָזָא | אַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוּרֹשׁ

¹⁴ He hoped for her release, and thought that this would be unlikely if it were learned that she was a descendant of the royal house of Shaul (Rashi.)

¹⁵ The Holy One, blessed is He, said to him, 'You sought the welfare of a single soul—Esther's welfare. By your life, you will eventually seek the welfare of an entire nation! Thus it is written, "[Mordechai]...sought the welfare of his people, and was the spokesman for the peace of his descendants." (see 10:3)

¹⁶ Not "to her," "with her." Mordechai knew that a woman of Esther's saintliness could only have been subjected to Achashverosh's pleasure as an instrument of some grand Providential design. He waited to ascertain what would be done with her—by Providence. (Rashi.)

at the end
of her participation in the course for women
which lasted twelve months—
for they were anointed, during their cosmetic
treatment, with the following:
six months with balm of myrrh,
and six months with aromatic ointments
and other womanly cosmetics.

3. This is how the young woman would be admitted
to the king:
whatever she requested would be provided
to accompany her from the harem residence
to the royal palace.

14. She would arrive in the evening
and return in the morning,
to a second harem residence,
in the custody of Sha'ashgaz,
the king's eunuch, overseer of the concubines.
She would no longer be admitted to the king
unless the king desired her,
when she would be summoned by name.

15. When the time arrived for Esther,
the daughter of Avichayil,
the uncle of Mordechai,
whom he had adopted as a daughter,
to be admitted to the king,
she requested nothing
save what was suggested by Heigai,
the king's eunuch, the harem overseer.
Esther was regarded with favor
by everyone who beheld her.¹⁷

מִקְדָּשׁ
הַיּוֹת לְהָקִנְתֵּן הַגְּשִׁים
שְׁנִים אֶפְרָאִים חֲדֵשׁ
כִּי כֵן יִמְלָאוּ יְמֵי מִרְוִיחַ

שְׁשָׁה חֲרָשִׁים בְּשָׁמֶן הַמָּרוֹן
וּשְׁשָׁה חֲרָשִׁים בְּבָשָׂרִים
וּבְמִתְרֹזִים הַגְּשִׁים:
ג. וְכֹה תַּפְעַרְתָּ בָּאָה
אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֵחֶל-אֲשֶׁר חָאָמֵר יִתְמַן לְהָ
לְבָוֹא עַלְיהָ מִבֵּית הַגְּשִׁים
עֲדִיבִים הַמְּלָאָנִים:
יד. בְּעַרְבָּה | הַיּוֹם בָּאָה
זָכְרֹן דָּבָר
אֶל-בֵּית הַגְּשִׁים שְׁנִי
אֶל-יַיְךְ שְׁעַשְׁבֹּן
סְרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁמַר הַפִּילְגְּשִׁים
לְאַ-חֲבּוֹא עוֹד אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ
כִּי אִסְּחַפֵּץ בָּה הַמֶּלֶךְ
וּנְקֻרָא בְּשָׁמוֹ:
טו. וּבְהַגִּיעַ חָוִידָא סְתִיר
בַּת-אַכְּיַתִיל |
דוֹ מְרַדְּלִי
אֲשֶׁר לְקַח-לַיּוֹן לְבָת
לְבָוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ
לֹא בְּקַשְׁתָּה דָּבָר
כִּי אִם אַחֲר-אֲשֶׁר יִאָמֶר הַנִּי
סְרִיס-הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁמַר הַגְּשִׁים
וְתַהַי אֶסְתָּר נְשָׁאת חַן
בְּעִינֵּי כָּל-רָאִיתָה:

¹⁷ Everyone imagined that she was their countrywoman. (Megillah, 13:a.)

16. Esther was brought to King Achashverosh,
into his royal palace,
in the tenth month—
that is, the month of Teves—
during the seventh year of his reign.

17. The king loved Esther
more than all the women,
she gained his favor and his benevolence
more than all the maidens,
so he placed the royal crown upon her head,
and coronated her in place of Vashti.

18. The king tendered a magnificent feast
for all of his ministers and servants—
the feast of Esther.

He waived the colonial taxes,
and lavished gifts with majestic largesse.

19. When the maidens were gathered a second time,
Mordechai sat at the gateway to the king.¹⁸

20. Esther would not reveal [the identity of]
her heritage or her people,
just as Mordechai had directed her.
Esther followed Mordechai's bidding,
just as she did when she was reared by him.

21. In those days,
when Mordechai sat at the gateway to the king,
Bigsan and Seresh became enraged—
they were two of the king's stewards,
of the guardians of the entrance [to his dwelling]—

and sought to assault King Achashverosh.

22. The matter was apprehended by Mordechai.¹⁹

טו. ותלך אסתר אל-המלך אחשveroֹש
אל-כִּית מֶלֶכְוֹת
בָּתֵּן הַעֲשֵׂר
הוֹא-חַדֵּשׁ טָבַת
בְּשָׁנָה-שָׁבָע לְמֶלְכוֹתָה:
יו. וַיַּאֲהַב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-אֱسָתָר
מִכְּלִיל-הַגָּשָׁשִׁים
וְחַשְׁאַ-תָּן וְחַסְדָּן לְפָנָיו
מִכְּלִיל-הַבְּתוּלָות
וַיַּשְׁם כְּחַרְ-מֶלֶכּוֹת בְּרוֹאָשָׁה
וְקָמְלִיכָה תְּמִתָּה וְשִׁתָּה:
יא. וַיַּעֲשֵׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתָּה גָּדוֹלָה
לְכָל-שָׂרִיו וְעָכְרִיו
אֶת מִשְׁתָּה אֱסָתָר
וְהַנְּתָה לְמִדְינָה עָשָׂה
וַיִּתְּנוּ מִשְׁאָחָת בְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:
יט. וּבַהֲקָבֵץ בְּתוּלָות שְׁנִיתָה
וּמְרַדְכִּי יִשְׁבַּכְ שְׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ:
כ. אֵין אֱסָתָר מִגְּדָה
מוֹלְךָה וְאֶת-עָמָה
בְּאֵשֶׁר צָוָה עַלְיהָ מְרַדְכִּי
וְאֶת-מְאֻמָּר מְרַדְכִּי אֱסָתָר עָשָׂה
בְּאֵשֶׁר הוּיָה בְּאֶמְנָה אַתָּה:
כא. בְּיִמְּסָדָה
וּמְרַדְכִּי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשְׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ
קָאָל בְּגָתָן וְחַרְשָׁ
שְׁנִינִי-סְפִירִיטִי הַמֶּלֶךְ
מִשְׁמָנִי נְפָרָה
וַיַּבְקְשׁוּ לְשִׁלְתַּחַד בְּמַלְךְ אֶחָשְׁוֹרֶשׁ:
כב. וַיַּגְדִּעַ הַדָּבָר לְמְרַדְכִּי

¹⁸ Admonishing Esther. Thus, Esther would not reveal, etc.... (Rashi.)

¹⁹ The plotters spoke freely in their native Tarsi tongue, unaware that Mordechai, like all members of the Sanhedrin, was fluent in seventy languages. He overheard the plot, and alerted the queen. (Rashi.)

who reported it to Queen Esther.
Esther related it to the king in Mordechai's name.

23. The matter was investigated and verified,
and both were hung from a gallows.

This was inscribed in the book of archives
in the presence of the king.

וַיָּגֹד לְאֶسְתֵּר הַמְלָכָה
וַיִּמְאַר אֶסְתֵּר לַפְלָךְ בְּשָׁם מִרְדָּכַי:
כֹּג. וַיַּקְרֵב נָכְרָר וַיַּמְצֵא
וַיַּתְלוּ שְׁגִינָּה עַל־עַץ
וַיַּכְתֵּב בְּסֶפֶר דְּבָרַי תַּיִם
לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

פרק ג Chapter 3

1. After these events,²⁰

King Achashverosh conferred eminence on Haman,
the son of Hamdasa, the Agagite, and exalted him,
placing his seat of office
above all of his fellow ministers.

2. And all of the king's servants

who were at the gateway to the king
kneeled and prostrated themselves before Haman,
for the king had so commanded concerning him—
but Mordechai would neither kneel
nor prostrate himself.

3. Said the king's servants
who were at the gateway of the king
to Mordechai,

"Why are you flouting
the king's command?"

4. It happened that, when they spoke to him daily,
and he paid them no heed,
they informed Haman.²¹

א. אֶתְר | הַדְּבָרִים הָאֶלְהָה
גַּדֵּל הַפָּלָךְ אֲחַשְׁוֹרֹשׁ אֶת־הַמָּן
בְּנוֹ הַמָּדְתָּא הַאֲגָגִי וַיַּנְשַׁאֲהוּ
וַיְשַׁטֵּם אֲחִיכָּסָאוּ

מַעַל בְּלִ-הַשְׁׂרִים אֲשֶׁר אָתוּ:
ב. וּבְלִ-עַכְלִי הַפָּלָךְ
אֲשֶׁר־בַּשְׁעַר הַפָּלָךְ
כָּרְעִים וּמְשֻׁתְחוּם לְהַמָּן
כִּי־כָּן צָוָה־לּוּ הַפָּלָךְ
וּמְרַדְּבֵי לֹא יִכְרַע
וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲווּ:

ג. וַיִּמְאַר צָבָא הַמָּלָךְ
אֲשֶׁר־בַּשְׁעַר הַפָּלָךְ
לִמְרַדְּכָי
מְדוֹזֵעַ אַתָּה עוֹבֵר
אַתָּה מַצּוֹּת הַמֶּלֶךְ:
ד. וַיֹּהֵי פְּאַמְבָּם אֶלְיוֹן יוֹם וַיָּסֶם
וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵיכָם
וַיַּגִּידוּ לְהַמָּן

²⁰ Whereby Esther ascended to the throne, and the king was beholden to Mordechai, so that the basis for the eventual redemption was in place—then, "King Achashverosh gave eminence to Haman..." Providence prepares the remedy before allowing the calamity to strike. (Rashi.)

²¹ When the servants informed Haman that Mordechai refused to kneel, he remarked that Mordechai's forefathers, Yakov and Rachel, and their children had prostrated themselves before his ancestor Eisav (Bereishis, 33:3.) When this remark was conveyed to Mordechai, he retorted that he was a descendant of Yakov's youngest son, Binyamin, who was born after the meeting with Eisav (Ibid, 35:18,) and had never prostrated himself before a mortal. (Midrash, 7:7.)

to see whether Mordechai's avowal would be sustained—
for he told them that he was a Yehudi.

5. Haman then observed that Mordechai neither kneeled nor prostrated himself before him, and Haman was totally incensed.

6. But it was demeaning, in his view, to strike at Mordechai alone, for he was informed of [the identity of] Mordechai's people. Haman sought to destroy all the Yehudim throughout Achashverosh's realm— Mordechai's people.

7. In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, during King Achashverosh's twelfth year, a "pur", meaning "lot", was cast in the presence of Haman, for a specific day,

and, specifically, the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.²²

8. Haman then said to King Achashverosh: "There exists a particular people, far-flung, widespread among the peoples in all the colonies of your realm.

Their customs differ from those of all peoples, and they do not abide by his majesty's bylaws; his majesty has nothing to gain by tolerating them.

9. If his majesty deems it proper,

לראות
היעמדו דברי מרדכי
קייחיד לעם אשורי הוא יהודי
ה. וירא ממן
קיאין מרדכי
כברע ומשתכחוה לו
וימלא ממן חמה:
ו. ויבנו בעיניו
לשלה יד במרדי לבודו
קייחיד לו
אתעם מרדכי
ויבקש ממן להשמיד את כל היהודים
אשר בכל מלכות אחשveroוש
עם מרדכי:
ז. בחרץ הראשון הו-חרץ ניפן
בשנה שתקים עשרה למלך אחשveroוש
הפייל פור הוא הגובל
לפניהם
מיום ליום
ומחרץ לחרץ שנים-עשר
וואחרץ אדר:
ח. ויאמר ממן למלך אחשveroוש
ישנו עם אחד
מגזר ומפרץ בין העמים
בכל מדינות מלכוות
ודמיים שנוט ממלעם
ואת-רתי המלך אינם עושים
ולמלך אין-שותה לנינים:
ט. אם על המלך טוב

²² Haman rejoiced, for it was in that month that Moshe died, indicating, he thought, that the month was unfortunate for the Jews. But he failed to realize that, as Moshe was also born during Adar, the month is a propitious one for the Jews.(Megillah, 13:b.)

let it be inscribed that they are to be exterminated.²³

And I shall weigh out ten thousand silver kikars
under the auspices of the executive staff,
to be deposited in the royal coffers."

10. The king removed his ring from his hand,²⁴
and presented it to Haman the son of Hamdasa
the Agagite, oppressor of the Yehudim.

11. And the king said to Haman,
"Keep the silver
and do as you wish with the[se] people."

12. The royal scribes were then summoned,
during the first month,
on the thirteenth day of the month,
and transcripts were made
of all of Haman's directives,
to the imperial envoys,
to the governors of each of the colonies,
and to the ministers of each people,
each and every colony in its own script,
each and every people in its own language;
it was written in King Achashverosh's name
and sealed with the royal ring.

13. So that scrolls would be dispatched,
carried by couriers,
to all of the king's colonies;
to devastate, slaughter, and annihilate
all the Yehudim, young and old,

יבְּחַבֵּל אֶבֶדָם
וְעִשְׂרָה אֲלֹפִים כְּפֶרֶתְּסָף אֲשָׁקָול
עַל-יְרִיל עַלְיִ הַמֶּלֶךְ:

לְהַכְּיָא אַל-גָּנוּי הַמֶּלֶךְ:
וְנִסְרֵר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַח-טְבָעָתוֹ מַעַל יְדוֹ
וַיִּתְהַנֵּה לְהַמְּן בְּנֵי-מִדְיָה:
הַאֲגָגִי צָרֵר הַיְהוּדִים:

יא. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַמְּן
הַבָּסָר נָתַן לְךָ
וְהַלְּם לְעַשְׂוֹת בָּרוּ כְּטוּב בְּעִינֵיכֶם:

יב. וַיָּקָרְא אֶסְפָּרִי הַמֶּלֶךְ
בְּחַדְשֵׁ הַרְאָשׁוֹן

בְּשִׁלּוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בָּוֹ

וַיַּחֲתֵב

כָּל-אָשָׁר-צָוָה הַמֶּן
אֵל אַחֲשְׁוֹרְפְּנֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְאַל-הַפְּרֹתּוֹת אֲשֶׁר | עַל-מִדְיָה וּמִדְיָה
וְאַל-שְׁרִי עַם וּעַם

מִדְיָה וּמִדְיָה כְּכַתְבָה

וּעַם וּעַם כְּלִשְׁוֹנוֹ

בְּשָׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרֵשׁ נְכֻמָּב

וְנִיחַת בְּטָבְעָתָה הַמֶּלֶךְ:

יג. וְנִשְׁלֹוח סְפָרִים

בִּינְדֵּ הַרְאִים

אַל-כָּל-מִדְיָה כְּלִילָה

לְהַשְׁמֵיד לְהַרְגֵּז וּלְאֶפְדֵּד

אַח-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים מַגְצֵר וּמַדְזָקֵן

²³ Earlier, Haman had advised Achashverosh to entice the Jews into behaving sinfully, so that they would incur God's wrath. Achashverosh followed the advice, and invited them to the royal feast (1:5–8.) Mordechai warned them not to attend, but many thousands ignored the warning, and joined in the drunken debauchery. The incriminating angel then argued that they were worthy of destruction, and God agreed. (Midrash, 7:13.)

²⁴ The removal of the king's ring was more effective than the forty-eight prophets sent by God to admonish the people. They could not convince them to repent, but the transfer of the ring to Haman produced three days of fasting and repentance (4:16) (Megillah, 14:a).

children, women, in a single day—
on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month,
which is the month of Adar—
with their booty to be despoiled.

14. The terms of the writ
would become legally binding
in each and every colony—
displayed conspicuously before all the peoples,
so that they would be poised on that day.

15. The couriers
were dispatched by urgent royal command,
and the decree was delivered
in the capital city of Shushan.
The king and Haman then sat down for drinks,
while the city of Shushan²⁵ was in confusion.

צָרַف וְנִשְׁיּוֹם כִּיּוֹם אֶחָד
בְּשִׁלְוֹשָׁה עַשֶּׂר לְחַנְשׁ שְׁנִינִים-עַשֶּׂר
הוּא-חַנְשׁ אֶחָד
וְשְׁלָלִים לְבָזָז:
יד. פָּתַחֲנָן הַקְּתָב
לְהַפְּתָחָן דָת
בְּכָל-מִדְיָנָה וּמִדְיָנִית
גָּלוּי לְכָל-הָעָםִים
לְהִיּוֹת עֲתָקִים לִיּוֹם הַזֹּהָה:
טו. הַנְּרָאִים
יָצָא רְחֻפִים בְּרַכְבָּר הַפְּלָלָה
וְהַקְּתָב נִתְעַנָּה
בְּשִׁוְשָׁן הַבִּירָה
וּמַפְּלָךְ וּמַמְּנָן יִשְׁבּוּ לְשָׁתּוֹת
וּמַעֲיר שְׁוֹשָׁן בְּבָזָז:

Chapter 4 פרק ד

1. Mordechai was apprised
of everything that had transpired.²⁶

Mordechai rent his garments,
and garbed himself in sackcloth and ashes.

He proceeded into the city,
and sounded a great, bitter wail.²⁷

2. He came to the front of the king's gate,
for one could not enter the gateway to the king

א. וּמְרַדְּבֵי יִדָּע
אֲח-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר גַּעַשָּׁה
וַיָּקְרַע מְרַדְּכֵי אֲח-בְּגָדָיו
וַיַּלְבַּשׁ שָׂק וְאַפְרָר
וַיֵּצֵא בְּתוֹךְ הַעִיר
וַיַּזְעַק זָעַקה גְּדוֹלָה וּמְרָה:
ב. נִבְוא עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ
כִּי אֵין לְבָא אֶל-שַׁעַר הַפְּלָלָה

²⁵ The Jews of the city (Rashi.) Or, the city in its entirety, as the Gentiles rejoiced, while the Jews wept. (Targum.)

²⁶ By Divine revelation. He was told that the people were being punished for kneeling before an idol during the times of Nevuchadnezzar, and for joining in the feast of Achashverosh. (Rashi.)

²⁷ When the patriarch Ya'akov intercepted Yitzchak's blessing, his brother Eisav sounded a great, bitter wail. (Bereishis, 27:34) God recognizes every complaint, even that of Eisav, and awaits the opportune historic moment for a suitable response. Now, after nine centuries, Eisav's wail was matched by the great, bitter wail sounded by Ya'akov's descendant, Mordechai, over the decree promulgated by Eisav's descendant, Haman. (Midrash, 8:1)

clad in sackcloth.

3. And in each and every colony,
wherever the king's directives and bylaws reached—
there was immense grief among the Yehudim,

fasting, weeping and lamenting.

Sackcloth and ashes cloaked multitudes.

4. Esther's maidservants and stewards came
and told her about it,

and the queen was extremely shaken.

She dispatched garments to clothe Mordechai
and remove his sackcloth,
but he refused them.

5. She then called for Hasach,²⁸
one of the king's officials,

whom he had placed at her disposal,
and instructed him concerning Mordechai,
to ascertain what was happening, and why.

6. Hasach withdrew, and went to Mordechai,
to the city thoroughfare,

which was at the front of the gateway to the king.

7. Mordechai informed him
of all that he had experienced,
and of the silver²⁹

which Haman had explicitly promised
to weigh into the royal coffers

so that the Yehudim would be annihilated.

8. A copy of the text of the legally binding writ
which had been delivered in Shushan,

בלבוש שָׁקָ:

ג. וְכֹל־מִרְגֵּנָה וּמִדִּינָה

מִקּוּם אֲשֶׁר־דָּבָר־הַפְּלָקָה וְרוּחוֹ מִצְּיעָן
אֲכָל־זָדוֹל לִיהוּדִים

וְצָוָם וְבָכָה וּמִסְפָּר

שָׁק וְאָפָר יָצָע לְרַבִּים:

ד. וְתַּחֲנוֹנָה נְעָרוֹת אֱسָתָר וּמִסְרִיךְ
וַיְגִידוּ לְהָ

וְתַּחֲלִיל הַפְּלָקָה מָאֵד

וְתַּשְׁלִיחַ בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת־מְרֻדָּבִי
וְלַהֲסִיר שָׁקָו מִעַלְיוֹ
וְלֹא קָבֵל:

ה. וְתַּקְרַא אָסָטָר לְהָקָה
מִסְרִיךְ הַמְּלָךְ אֲשֶׁר

הָעָמֵד לְפָנָיו

וְתַּצְוֹהוּ עַל־מְרֻדָּבִי

לְרַעַת מַהֲזָה וּעַל־מַהֲזָה:
וַיֵּצֵא הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־מְרֻדָּבִי

אֶל־דָּרוּב הָעִיר

אֲשֶׁר לְפָנֵי שְׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ:

ו. וַיַּגְדֵּל־לוּ מְרֻדָּבִי
אָתָּה כָּל־אֲשֶׁר גָּרָהוּ
וְאתָּתָּה פְּרַשְׁת הַכְּסָף

אֲשֶׁר אָמַר קָמָן

לְשָׁקָול עַל־גָּנוּי הַמֶּלֶךְ

בְּיהוּדִים לְאַפְּדָם:

ח. וְאַתָּה־פְּתַשְׁתָּגֵן כַּתְבָּהָרָת
אֲשֶׁר־גַּתְּנָן בְּשׂוֹשָׁן

²⁸ This was the prophet Daniel (Megillah, 15:a.) According to one opinion, Haman arranged for his assassination when he learned that he served as the liaison between Mordechai and the queen (Targum. See Tosafos to Bava Basra, 4:a.)

²⁹ Mordechai knew of this by Divine revelation (Targum.)

mandating that they be destroyed,
he gave to him,
to show Esther, and to inform her;
and to order her to gain entrance to the king,
to plead with him,
and to beg him to spare her people.

9. Hasach came back, and conveyed, to Esther,
Mordechai's remarks.

10. Esther spoke with Hasach,
and instructed him to [tell] Mordechai:

11. "All of his majesty's servants,
as well as the peoples of his majesty's colonies,
know that any man or woman
who comes as close to his majesty
as the innermost courtyard
without an invitation,
suffers a single fate; execution—
save for someone toward whom his majesty extends
the golden sceptre, to permit him to live.
And I have not been granted an invitation
to visit his majesty
these thirty days."

12. They³⁰ conveyed Esther's remarks to Mordechai.

13. Mordechai declared, in reply to Esther:
"You had better not fantasize
that in the royal palace you will escape
the fate of all the other Jews."

14. For, if you keep silent at this time,
release and liberation

לְהַשְׁמִיךְם
נִמְנֵן לֹא
לְכַרְאוֹת אֶחָד אָסָטָר וְלַהֲגִיד לְה־
וְלָצְוֹות עַלְיכָה לְבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ
לְהַחְתְּנוּ-לֹו

וְלַבְּקַשׁ מַלְפְּנֵינוּ עַל-עַמָּה:
ט. וְנִבְאַוְתָה וַיַּגֵּד לְאָסָטָר

אֶת דְּבָרַי מַרְדָּכָי:

י. וְנִתְאַמֵּר אָסָטָר לְהַתְּהֻךְ
וְחַצְגָּהוּ אֶל-מַרְדָּכָי:

יא. כְּלַעֲבָרִי הַפְּלָלָה

וְעַטְמָן מַדְינָה הַפְּלָלָה
יְדָעִים אֲשֶׁר כְּלַא-אִישׁ וְאֶשְׁתָּה
אֲשֶׁר-יָכֹא אֶל-הַפְּלָלָה

אֶל-הַחְתָּלָר הַפְּנִימִית

אֲשֶׁר לְאַיְקָרָא

אֶתְתַּחַת דָּתוֹ לְהַמְּלִיחָה

לְבֶן מַאֲשֶׁר יָוֹשִׁיט-לֹו הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֶת-שְׁرֶבֶת הַזָּהָב וְתִיכְחָה
וְאָנוּ לֹא נִקְרָאתִי

לְבָא אֶל-הַפְּלָלָה

זֶה שְׁלוּשִׁים יוֹםִים:

יב. וַיִּגְיֹדוּ לִמְרְדָּכָי אֶת דְּבָרַי אָסָטָר:

יג. וַיֹּאמֶר מַרְדָּכָי לְהַשְׁיב אֶל-אָסָטָר
אֶל-תְּדַמֵּי בְּנֵפְשָׁךְ

לְהַמְּלָט בֵּית-הַמֶּלֶךְ

מִכֶּל-הַיְהוּדִים:

יד. כִּי אִם-הַחְתָּלָשׁ מִתְּחִילִישׁ בָּעֵת הַזֹּאת
גְּנוּחָה וְהַאֲלָה

³⁰ Others, but not Hasach. Haman had him assassinated (Targum.) Or, Hasach felt that Esther's reply fell short of her responsibility as a Jewess. He did not wish to serve as the emissary of her failure, and withdrew as her messenger to Mordechai. (Megillah, 15:a.)

will materialize for the Yehudim
from some other source,
and you and your father's lineage will perish.
Who knows whether, at this time next year,
you will retain your royal position."

יעמוד ליהודים
מפיקום אחר
ואת ובית-אביך חאנדו
וכני יונע אס-לעט דזאת
הצעת מלכות:
טו. ותאמר אסתר להшиб אל-מרדי:
טו. לך כנוס את-כל-היהודים
המצאים בשושן וצומע עלי
ואלה-אכלך ואלה-תשחוח
שלשת ימים לילה ויום
גס-אני ונערתי אצום בז
יבן אבוא אל-הפלך
אשר לא-יכרת
ובאשר אברתי אברתי:
ז. ניעבר מרכבי
וביש קבל אשר-צotta עלי אסתר:

15. Esther declared, in reply to Mordechai:
16. "Go, gather all the Yehudim
found in Shushan, and fast for my sake.
Take neither food nor drink
for three days—night and day.
I and my maidservants will also fast this way.
Having done this, I will come to the king
even though it is unlawful
and as I am bereft,³¹ so must I be further bereft."

17. Mordechai passed through [the city],³²
and implemented all of Esther's instructions to him.

פרק ה Chapter 5

1. It was on the third day.
Esther cloaked herself in majesty,³³
and stood in the innermost palace courtyard,
facing the palace.
The king sat on his imperial throne,

א. ויהי ביום השלישי
ותלבש אסתר מלכות
ונחמד בפנאי בימת הפלך הפנימית
נכח בית הפלך
ונהפלך יושב על-כיסא מלכוות

³¹ Of my family, so must I now be bereft of earthly life (Targum.) Or, 'So must I now be bereft of you.' Esther had been permitted to resume marital relations with her husband Mordechai (see fn. 5), as she had never willingly visited Achashverosh. Now, however, she would "be bereft" of Mordechai. Although her action in rescuing the entire nation was supremely meritorious, her voluntary submission to the king constituted a breach of the marriage covenant with Mordechai, and she would be prohibited forever from having relations with him. (Rashi, from Midrash.)

³² Or, "Mordechai bypassed" the laws of Pesach. The fast fell on the first day of Pesach, when the holiday feast is obligatory. Yet Mordechai "bypassed" the obligation and ordered the fast, using the special powers of the Sanhedrin to suspend such obligations in times of extreme need. (Rashi, from Megillah, 15:a.)

³³ In majestic garments. However, as Scripture omits the word "garments," the inference is that she was cloaked in majesty itself—in Divine majesty. Esther enveloped herself in the supremely majestic Presence of the Sacred Spirit. (Rashi, from Megillah, 15:a.)

- in the royal chamber,
facing the entrance to the palace.
2. Now, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the courtyard, she gained his favorable regard, and the king extended, towards Esther, the golden sceptre in his hand. Esther came closer, and touched the point of the sceptre.
3. The king said to her: "What do you need, Queen Esther, what do you wish? Up until half the empire,³⁴ and it shall be granted to you!"
4. Esther said, "If his majesty deems it proper, let his majesty and Haman³⁵ attend, today, a feast which I have prepared for him."
5. The king said, "Urge Haman to quickly fulfill Esther's instructions." So the king and Haman arrived at the feast which Esther had prepared.
6. The king said to Esther at the winefest, "Whatever you request shall be granted to you! Whatever you wish, up until half the empire, shall be fulfilled!"
- גָּבְרִית הַמֶּלֶךְ
נֶכֶחֶת הַבָּיִת:
ב. וַיַּהֵי קָרְאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-אָסָטָר הַמֶּלֶךְ
עַמְּדָה בַּחֲצֵר
גַּשְׁׂאָה חָן בְּעִזָּיו
וַיַּשְׁׂט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאָסָטָר
אֶת-שְׁרָכִיט הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּ יָדוֹ
וַתִּקְרַב אָסָטָר
וַתַּגְעַגְעַג בְּרָאֵשׁ הַשְּׁרָכִיט:
ג. וַיֹּאמֶר לְהַמֶּלֶךְ
מַה-זֶּה אָסָטָר הַמֶּלֶךְ
וּמַה-בְּקַשְׁתָּה
עַד-חָצֵי הַמֶּלְכִּות
וַיַּגְתַּהּ לְהָ:
ד. וַיֹּאמֶר אָסָטָר אֶם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טֻוב
יְבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ הַיּוֹם
אֶל-הַמֶּשְׁטָה אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂיתִי לְהָ:
ה. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ
מִהָּרוֹ אֶת-הַמְּלֵן לְעַשׂוֹת
אֶת-דְּבָרָ אָסָטָר
וַיָּבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ
אֶל-הַמֶּשְׁטָה אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂיתִי אָסָטָר:
ו. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאָסָטָר בְּמִשְׁתָּהָה תַּיִן
מַה-שָּׁאַלְתָּךְ וַיַּגְתַּהּ לְהָ
וּמַה-בְּקַשְׁתָּה
עַד-חָצֵי הַמֶּלְכִּות וְחַעַשְׁ:

³⁴ This alludes to the Temple in Jerusalem, which was situated at the center of the Persian empire, and was then in ruins. Achashverosh was prepared to satisfy the queen's every whim, up until, but not including, the restoration of the Temple, which stood at 'half the empire.' (Rashi, from Megillah, 15:b.)

³⁵ Esther wanted Haman near at hand, so that she might find a means of discrediting him before the king; or, she thought that the king would suspect Haman of consorting with her, and execute both of them; or, she felt that the Jews would rely on her influence with the king, rather than on God. She therefore created the impression that she had abandoned them in favor of Haman, so that they would concentrate fully on prayer and penitence. (Megillah, 15:b.)

7. Esther replied, saying,
“My request, and my wish:
8. If I have gained His Majesty's favorable regard,
and if His Majesty deems it proper
to fulfill my request
and gratify my wish;
let His Majesty and Haman attend the feast
which I shall tender for them—
and tomorrow
I shall comply with His Majesty's command.”³⁶
9. Haman ventured forth, that day,
joyful and content;
but when Haman perceived Mordechai
at the gateway to the king,
neglecting to rise or bestir himself for him,
Haman was totally incensed at Mordechai.
10. Haman restrained himself, arrived at his home,
and gathered his friends
and his wife Zeresh.
11. Haman boasted, to them,
of the glories of his affluence
and of his profusion of sons;
of all the eminence the king had given him,
and that he had exalted him
above the ministers and the royal servants.
12. “And,” Haman declared,
“Even now, Queen Esther let no man
come with the king to the feast
that she had prepared, but myself;
moreover, tomorrow also
- ז. ומען אסתר ותאמר:
שאלאתי ובקשתי:
ח. אם מצליחתי חן בעיני המלך
ואם עלה המלך טוב
לחות אח-שאלאתי
ולעשות אחות-בקשתי
יבוא המלך והמן אל-המשתה
אשר עשה לנו
וימחר
ਆעשה בקדבר המלך:
ט. ויצא המן ביום זה
שמחת וטוב לב
וכראות המן את-מרדכי
בשער המלך
ולא-קס ולא-זע מפניו
וימלא המן על-מרדכי חמלה
ויחטא פק נון וניבוא אל-ביתו
וישלח וביא את-אקהיו
ואת-זרש אשתו:
יא. ויספר להם המן
את-כבוד עשרו
ורב בניו
ואת כל-אשר גדרו המלך
ואת אשר נשאו
על-השרים ועבדו המלך:
יב. ויאמר המן
אף לא-הביבאלה אסוחר המלכה
עם-המלך אל-המשתה
אשר-עשתה כי אם-אותי
ונגלי מחר

³⁶ That I reveal my identity. (Rashi.)

I have been invited by her to join the king.

13. Still, all this is meaningless to me whenever

I see Mordechai the Yehudi sitting at the gateway to the king.”

14. His wife Zeresh³⁷ told him—

and so too all his friends—

“Let them build a gallows fifty *amōhs* high.

In the morning, suggest to the king

that they hang Mordechai from it

and join the king at the feast joyfully.”

The scheme pleased Haman,

and he built the gallows.

אָנִי קְרוֹגֵא־לָה עַמְּסַפְּלָה:

ג. וְכָל־לָה אִינְגָנוֹ שׁוֹה לִי

כָּכָל־עַתָּה

אֲשֶׁר אָנִי רָאָה אֶת־מְרַדְכִּי כִּי־הַוּדִי

יֹשֵׁב בַּשְּׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ:

יד. וְתַאֲמֵר לוֹ זָרֶשׁ אַשְׁתָּוֹ

וְכָל־אַחֲבָיו

יַעֲשֵׂו־עַץ גָּבֵת חַמְשִׁים אַמְתָּה

וּבְבָקָר | אָמָר לְפָלָךְ

וַיַּחֲלֹו אֶת־מְרַדְכִּי עַל־יְהוּדָה

וְכָא עַמְּסַפְּלָה אֶל־הַמְּשֻׁתָּה שְׁמָמָת

וַיַּטְבֵּל תְּדַבֵּר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּן

וַיַּעֲשֵׂה הַעַזָּה:

פרק ו Chapter 6

1. That night, the king's sleep was disturbed,³⁸ so he called for the bringing of the book of archives, of historical events, to be recited before the king.

2. It was discovered, in the record, that Mordechai had reported that Bigsan and Seresh, two of the king's stewards, of the guardians of the entrance,

א. בְּלִילָה כִּי־הָוָא נְדָרָה שְׁנִית הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאָמָר לְהַבְּיא אֶת־סְפָר הַזְּכָרוֹנֹת דְּבָרַנִי בִּימִים וַיַּהַי נְקָרָאים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

ב. וַיִּמְצָא כְּתוּב אֲשֶׁר הָגִיד מְרַדְכִּי עַל־בְּגָתָנָא וְתָרָשׁ שְׁנִי סְרִיכִי הַפָּלָךְ מַשְׁמָרִי הַפָּרָה

³⁷ There were three-hundred and sixty-five advisers, and Zeresh was the shrewdest of all. She recalled that most forms of execution were ineffective against Jews—Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had survived the fiery furnace, Daniel the lion's den, Yosef the dungeon, etc. No one in Jewish history, however, had survived the gallows. Thus, she reasoned, hanging would be the proper method of executing Mordechai. Haman agreed, and built the gallows. (Midrash, 9:2.)

³⁸ This was not a natural episode of sleeplessness, but was engendered by Providential design, to begin the sequence of events which would lead to Haman's downfall. Or, the king suspected Esther of consorting with Haman, and of plotting his assassination. He wondered why no one had informed him of the plot. Perhaps, he thought, because he had failed to reward those who had saved him in the past. So he called for the book of archives, to ascertain whether this was true. (Rashi.)

had sought to assault
King Achashverosh.
3. The king said,

"What honor or eminence has been bestowed
on Mordechai for this?"

The king's youthful valets replied,
"Not a thing has been done for him."

4. "Who is in the courtyard?," said the king.

Now Haman had just reached
the outer courtyard of the palace,
to suggest to the king that Mordechai be hung
from the gallows he had prepared for him.³⁹

5. The king's youths said to him,
"Haman is here, standing in the courtyard."

The king said, "Let him in."

6. Haman entered.

The king said to him,
"What should be done for a man
whom the king wishes to honor.

Now Haman reflected,⁴⁰
'Whom would the king desire to glorify
more than me?'

7. Haman said to the king,
"A man whose glory the king desires!

8. Let them bring the imperial robe,
worn by His Majesty,
and the horse mounted by His Majesty;
the imperial crown to be placed on his head.

9. Let the robe and the horse be handed

אֲשֶׁר בַּקְשׁוֹ לְשָׁלֹחַ יָד
בְּפִלְגָּה אַחֲשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ:
ג. וַיֹּאמֶר הַפְּלִגָּה
מִה-גְּנֻעָשָׂה יְקַר וְגַדְלוֹתָה
לִמְרַדְכֵי עַל-זָהָב
וְלִאֱמֹרְיוֹ גַּעֲנִי הַפְּלִגָּה מִשְׁרָתָיו
לְאַגְּנֻעָשָׂה עַמּוֹ דָּבָר:
ד. וַיֹּאמֶר הַפְּלִגָּה מַיִן בְּחָצֶר
וְקֹמֵן בָּאָה
לְחַצֵּר בֵּית-הַפְּלִגָּה הַתִּיצְׁוֹתָה
לְאָמֹר לְפִלְגָּה לְתִלּוֹת אֶת-מְרַדְכֵי
עַל-הָעָץ אֲשֶׁר-הָקִין לוֹ:
ה. וַיֹּאמֶר גַּעֲנִי הַפְּלִגָּה אַלְיוֹ
הַגָּהָה קָמֵן עַמְּדָה בְּחָצֶר
וַיֹּאמֶר הַפְּלִגָּה יְבֹא:
ו. וַיְבֹא קָמֵן
וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַפְּלִגָּה
מַה-לְעָשֹׂות בְּאִישׁ
אֲשֶׁר הַפְּלִגָּה חִפֵּז בַּקְרָבוֹ
וַיֹּאמֶר הַמְּנוֹן בְּלִבּוֹ
לְמַיִן יְחִפֵּז הַפְּלִגָּה לְעַשׂוֹת יָקָר
יְוָתֵר מִמְּנָגָן:
ז. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמְּנוֹן אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ
אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַפְּלִגָּה חִפֵּז בַּקְרָבוֹ:
ח. יְבִיאוּ לְבִושׁ מֶלֶכְתָּה
אֲשֶׁר לְבִשְׁ-בּוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְסֹס אֲשֶׁר רַכֵּב עַלְיוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְאֲשֶׁר נְטוּ בְּכָרְמַלְכָות בְּרָאָשׁוֹן
ט. וְנַתְנוּן הַלְּבֹושׁ וְהַפְּגִיסָּה

³⁹ For himself—ultimately, Haman was hung from his own gallows. (Megillah, 16:a.)

⁴⁰ Some of the Sages derive, from this, that the Book of Esther was written by Divine inspiration. Otherwise, how could the author have known Haman's thoughts? (Megillah, 7:a.)

to a distinguished minister, a nobleman.

על־יד־אִישׁ מָלֵבִי תַּפְלֵלָה כְּפֹרָתָמִים

Then let them garb the man
whose glory the king desires,

וְהַלְבֵשׁ אֶחָדָאִישׁ

mount him on the horse in the city thoroughfare,⁴¹
אֲשֶׁר תַּפְלֵלָה תִּפְצֵץ בַּיּוֹקָרוֹ

אֲשֶׁר תַּפְלֵלָה תִּפְצֵץ בַּיּוֹקָרוֹ

and proclaim before him,
וְקָרְאוּ לְפָנָיו

'This is what is done with a man
whose glory the king desires!'

כְּכָה יִعַשֶּׂה לְאִישׁ

10. The king said to Haman,
י. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַמְּן

"Quickly, take the cloak and the horse
just as you said,

מִתְהָרָה קָח אֶת־הַלְבָבוֹשׁ וְאֶת־הַטּוֹסֶת
בְּאֲשֶׁר דָּבַרְתָּ

and do so to Mordechai the Yehudi,
וְעַשְׂה־כֵן לִמְרַדְכִּי הַיְהוּדִי

who sits at the gateway to the king.
הַיּוֹשֵׁב בַּשְׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ

Do not omit anything you mentioned!"
אֶל־תִּפְגַּל דָּבָר מְכֻלָּא אֲשֶׁר דָּבַרְתָּ

11. Haman took the robe and the horse
and garbed Mordechai.⁴²
י. וַיַּקְרַח הַמְּן אֶת־הַלְבָבוֹשׁ וְאֶת־הַטּוֹסֶת
וַיַּלבְשׁ אֶת־מְרַדְכִּי

Then he led him on horseback
וַיַּרְכִּיבֵהוּ

through the city thoroughfare,
בְּרַחוֹב הַעִיר

and proclaimed before him,
וַיָּקְרַא לְפָנָיו

"This is what is done with a man
כְּכָה יִעַשֶּׂה לְאִישׁ

whose glory the king desires."
אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּפְצֵץ בַּיּוֹקָרוֹ

12. Mordechai then returned
י. בַּיּוֹקָרוֹ וַיַּשְׁבַּט מְרַדְכִּי

to the gateway to the king,
אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ

while Haman was rushed home,
וְהַמְּן גַּדְעָן אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ

griefstricken, his head covered [in shame].⁴³
אֶבֶן וְחַפּוּרְיָה רָאשׁ:

13. Haman related to his wife Zeresh,
וְיִסְפַּר הַמְּן לְגַרְשֵׁן אֶשְׁתָּוֹ
and all his friends
וְלִכְלַדְבָּיו

⁴¹ Haman dropped his suggestion concerning the crown when he saw that it aroused the king's deep resentment. (Rashi.)

⁴² Haman found Mordechai engrossed in study, and asked what the subject was. 'The handful of flour,' Mordechai replied, 'which the Jews placed on the Temple altar for forgiveness.' 'Your handful of flour,' said Haman, 'has prevailed over my ten-thousand silver kikars' (Megillah, 16:a.)

⁴³ When Haman paraded past his own home, his daughter noticed the commotion from their rooftop. Presuming that her father was the honoree, and Mordechai the crier, she emptied a cistern of filthy waste material on Haman's head. She realized her mistake, and plunged to the ground to her death. Thus, Haman was griefstricken over his daughter's death, and his head was bespattered with filth. (Megillah, 16:a.)

all that had befallen him.
His counsellors and his wife Zeresh told him,
“As Mordechai is of Yehudite stock,
since you have begun to fall before him,
you cannot overcome him,
but will surely fall before him.”⁴⁴

14. While they were still conversing with him,
the king’s stewards arrived,
rushing to bring Haman
to the feast which Esther had prepared.

אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר קָרְבָּה
וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא חֲכָמִיו וַуְרָשָׁאֲשָׁרָה
אָם מִנְרָעָה הַיְהוּדִים מִרְכָּבָה
אֲשֶׁר הַחֲלוֹת לְנַפְלָל לְפָנָיו
לְאַיחָזָבָל לֹא
כִּי־נִפְולָל תִּפְולָל לְפָנָיו:
יד. עֲוֹדָט מִנְבָּרִים עַמּוֹ
וּסְרִיסִי הַמֶּלֶךְ הָגִיעוּ
וַיַּקְרְבָו לְהַבִּיא אֶת־הָמָן
אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂתָה אֲسֶתֶר:

Chapter 7

פרק ז

1. The king and Haman came
to drink with Queen Esther.
2. The king said to Esther,
at the second day’s winefest as well,
“Whatever your request, Queen Esther,
shall be granted you!
Whatever you wish,
even until half the empire, it shall be fulfilled!”

3. Queen Esther replied, saying,
“If I have gained your majesty’s favor
and if his majesty deems it proper,
let my life be granted me by my request,
and my people by my wish.

4. For we were sold, I and my people,
to be destroyed, slaughtered, and annihilated.
Now, had we been sold as slaves and maidservants,
I would have remained silent,

א. וַיָּבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן
לְשִׁתּוֹת עִם־אָסֶתֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ:
ב. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאָסֶתֶר
גַּם בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁנִי בְּמִשְׁתָּה הַזֹּאת
מַה־שְׁאַלְתָּךְ אָסֶתֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ
וַתַּגְתְּנוּ לְךָ
וּמָה־בְּקָשָׁתְךָ
עַד־חָצֵי הַמֶּלֶכְתָּה וְחַדְשָׁתָה:
ג. וַיַּעֲשֵׂן אָסֶתֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר
אִם־מְצַאָתִי תְּזַעֲרֵנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְאִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טֹוב
תַּנְחַנֵּלִי נְפָשִׁי בְּשָׁאַלְתִּי
וְעַמִּי בְּבָקָשָׁתִי:
ד. כִּי נִמְרְכָּנוּ אֶنְיָנִי וְעַמִּי
לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְגוּ וְלִאְבֹד
אָלֹג לְעָבָדִים וְלִשְׁפָחוֹת נִמְרְכָּנוּ
הַתְּרַשְּׁתִי

⁴⁴ The Jews are compared to the stars and to dust. When they fall, they are as low as dust, but when they rise, they reach the stars. (Rashi.)

but the oppressor has no regard
for losses incurred by his majesty.

כִּי אֵין נָאָר שָׁׂנָה
בְּנֵינָק הַמֶּלֶךְ:
ה. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרֹשׁ
נִיָּאָמֵד לְאֶسְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶךְהָ

5. King Achashverosh spoke.

כִּי הוּא זֶה

He said⁴⁵ to Queen Esther,

וְאֵיךְ הוּא זֶה

"Who is this?

אֲשֶׁר־מֶלֶךְ לוּבָן לְעָשָׂות כֵּן:

Who is the one

אֲשֶׁר־מֶלֶךְ לוּבָן לְעָשָׂות כֵּן:

that had the audacity to act this way?"

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר

6. Esther exclaimed,

אִישׁ צָר וְאוֹיב

"An oppressive man, an enemy—

קָמָן תְּבֻעָה תְּזִיזָה

this evil Haman!"—

וְקָמָן גְּבֻעָה

and Haman was terrified

מִלְּפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶכהָ:

before the king and the queen.

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ קָם בְּחַמְתוֹ מִמְּשִׁתָּה הַבִּין

7. The king rose, in a fit of rage, from the winefest

אַל־גְּבֻעָת הַבִּין

toward the orchard garden,

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ עָמֵד

while Haman got up

לְכַעַשׁ עַל־נְפָשׁוֹ מִאֶסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכהָ

to plead with Queen Esther for his life,

כִּי רָאָה

for he realized

כִּי־גְּלֻתָּה אֶלְיוֹן הַרְחָאָה

that it would end up badly for him

מִאתַּה הַמֶּלֶךְ:

from the king.

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁבֶן מִגְּנוֹת הַבִּין

8. When the king returned from the orchard garden

אַל־בִּית | מִשְׁתָּה הַבִּין

to the winefest room,

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ נִפְלֵל עַל־הַמֶּטֶה

Haman had fallen⁴⁶ on the couch

אֲשֶׁר אֶסְתֵּר עַלְיָה

upon which Esther reclined.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ

The king exclaimed,

וְאֵין בְּנֵי

"Even to overpower the queen

הַנָּסָם לְכַבּוֹשׁ אֶת־הַמֶּלֶכהָ

with me in the palace?"

עַמְּנִי בְּבִית

The words left the king's mouth,

הַדָּבָר יָצָא מִפְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

and Haman's face was enveloped in humiliation.

וַפְּנֵי הַמֶּן חַפְּבָבָה:

⁴⁵ The repetition here teaches that the king altered his method of communication with the queen. Previously, he had spoken to her only through surrogates. Now, however, when he learned that she was a descendant of the royal house of Shaul, he addressed her directly. (Rashi.)

⁴⁶ An angel forced him onto the couch, so that the king would be further enraged. (Megillah, 16:a.)

9. Then Charvonah declared,⁴⁷
[he was] one of the king's personal stewards,

"Moreover, there is the gallows
which Haman built for Mordechai,
who spoke up in favor of the king,
standing in Haman's house—
fifty *amōhs* high."

The king commanded, "Hang him from it."

10. They hung Haman from the gallows
which he had prepared for Mordechai,
and the king's anger dissipated.

ט. וַיֹּאמֶר מִרְבּוֹנָה
אָחֵר מִן־הַפְּרִיסִים לִפְנֵי הַפְּלַקְה
גַּם הַבְּהִרְאָז
אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הַמֶּן לְמִרְדָּכָי
אֲשֶׁר דִּבְרָטוֹב עַל־הַפְּלַקְה
עַמְדָה בְּבֵית הַמֶּן
גַּבְּהָתָה חַמְשִׁים אַמְתָה
וַיֹּאמֶר הַפְּלַקְה תְּלַבֵּחַ עַלְיוֹ:
י. וַיַּחֲלֹל אֶחָת־הַמֶּן עַל־הַעֲזָז
אֲשֶׁר־הַכִּין לְמִרְדָּכָי
וַחֲמָת הַפְּלַקְה שְׁבָכָה:

Chapter 8 פרק ח

1. That day,

א. בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא

נִמְןָה הַפְּלַקְה אֶחָשְׁוֹרֹשׁ לְאָסְטָר הַפְּלַקְה
אֶת־בֵּית הַמֶּן צִבְּרָה הַיְהוּדִים
וּמִרְדָּכָי בָּא לִפְנֵי הַפְּלַקְה
כִּי־הַגִּידָה אָסְטָר מִהַּוְאָלָה:

King Achashverosh awarded Queen Esther
the estate of Haman, the oppressor of the Yehudim.⁴⁸

And Mordechai appeared before the king,
for Esther had told him how he was related to her.

2. The king removed his ring,
which he had confiscated from Haman,

ב. נִסְרֵר הַפְּלַקְה אֶת־תְּבוּעָתוֹ
אֲשֶׁר הָעָבֵיר מַהֲמָן
וַיַּתְּבַעַת לְמִרְדָּכָי

and presented it to Mordechai.
And Esther authorized Mordechai
to take custody of Haman's estate.

ג. וַיַּתְּשִׁם אָסְטָר אֶחָד־מִרְדָּכָי
עַל־בֵּית הַמֶּן:

3. Esther spoke again before the king.
She threw herself at his feet and wept,
and pleaded with him
to divert the evil decree of Haman the Agagite;
and his scheme

לְהָעֵבֵר אֶת־דָּעַת הַמֶּן הָאָגָּגִי
וְאֶת מְחֻשְׁבָתוֹ

⁴⁷ This was not actually Charvonah, who was an ally of Haman. Rather, it was the prophet Eliyahu, who appeared as Charvonah to goad the king into hanging Haman. (Midrash, 10:9.)

⁴⁸ Haman's property was diverted from his heirs, so that his memory would be totally obliterated. (Cf. Shemos, 17:14; Devarim, 25:19.) Indeed, Midrash remarks that Haman's vast wealth was divided into three parts. One third was given to Esther and Mordechai, one third was used for the reconstruction of the Temple, and one third was appropriated to indigent Torah scholars. (Or Chadash.)

which he had devised against the Yehudim.

4. The king extended

the golden sceptre towards Esther.

Esther rose, and stood before the king.

5. She said, "If his majesty deems it proper,

and if I have gained favor before him,

and the matter seems fitting before his majesty,

and I am pleasing in his eyes;

then let a writ be issued rescinding the documents

conceived by

Haman, the son of Hamdasa, the Agagite,

that he wrote

ordering the annihilation of the Yehudim

who reside in all the providence of the king.

6. For how can I possibly look on

while catastrophe befalls my people?

And how can I possibly look on

while my heritage⁴⁹ is annihilated?

7. King Achashverosh said

to Queen Esther and to Mordechai the Yehudi,

"Here, I have given Haman's estate to Esther,

and he was hung from the gallows

for attacking the Yehudim.

8. Thus, you may issue a writ

concerning the Yehudim

as you please,

in the name of the king

and you may seal it with the king's ring;

for a writ issued in the name of the king

and sealed with the king's ring,

is not rescindable.

אשר חשב על-יהודיים:

ד. וַיּוֹשִׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ

לאסמלר אֵת שְׁרָבֶט נְזָבֶן

וּמְגַם אֲסָמֶר וּמְעַמֵּד לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

ה. וְאָמַר אֶסְמָעֵל הַמֶּלֶךְ טֻוב

וְאַמְּמַצְאָתִי תְּן לִפְנֵי

וְכַשֵּׁר נְקַבֵּל לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְטוֹבָה אֲנִי בְּעִינֵינוֹ

יפְתַּח לְהַשִּׁיב אֶת-הַסּוּרִים

מחשbatch

המן בְּזִוְּהַפְּנֵי הַאֲגָגִי

אשר בָּחָבֵב

לאבד אֶת-הַיְהוּדִים

אשר בְּכָל-מִדְינֹות הַמֶּלֶךְ:

ו. פְּיַ אִיכְכָּה אָוֶל וּרְאִיתִי

ברעה אֲשֶׁר-יִמְצָא אֶת-עַמִּי

וְאִיכְכָּה אָוֶל וּרְאִיתִי

בָּאַבְנָן מַולְתִּי:

ו. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַמְשֹׁרְשָׁה

לְאָסָתָר הַמֶּלֶךְ וּלְמַרְדָּכָי הַיְהוּדִי

הַבָּה בֵּית-הַמֶּן בְּתַחַת לְאָסָלָר

וְאַתָּה תְּלַי עַל-הַעַלְץ

עַל אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַח יְהוָה בְּיְהוּדִים:

ח. וְאַתָּה כְּחַבּוֹ

עַל-הַיְהוּדִים

כְּפָטָב בְּעִינֵיכֶם

בְּשָׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְחַמְמוֹ בְּטַבְעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ

כִּי-כָּתַב אֲשֶׁר-גַּנְכַּב בְּשָׁם-הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְנַחֲתָוּ בְּטַבְעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ

אֵין לְהַשִּׁיבָה:

⁴⁹ As the scion of the royal house of Shaul. If the nation is destroyed, its royalty is meaningless. (Yosef Lekach.)

9. The royal scribes were summoned at that time,⁵⁰ during the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty third of the month, and transcripts were made of all of Mordechai's directives, to the Yehudim, to the envoys, to the governors, and to the ministers of the colonies which extended from Hodu until Kush, one hundred and twenty-seven colonies; each and every colony in its own script, each and every people in its own language.

Also, to the Yehudim, in their script and their language.

10. He wrote in the name of King Achashverosh, sealed it with the king's ring, and dispatched scrolls carried by couriers on horseback, riders of the royal breed, fleet dromedaries bred from *ramachim*.

11. Namely that the king authorized the Yehudim in each and every city to assemble and stand in defense of their lives;⁵¹ to destroy, slaughter, and annihilate the military forces of any people or colony oppressing them, their children and women;

ט. וַיָּקֹרְאׁוּ סִפְרֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּעֵת הַגָּהִיה
בְּחַדְשֵׁ שְׂנִינָה
הַוְאִתְּחַדְשֵׁ שְׂנִינָה
בְּשְׁלוֹשָׁה וּעַשְׁ�ִים בָּזֶה
וַיִּכְתַּבְּ
כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה מֶרְכָּזִי
אֶל-הַיּוֹדֵם וְאֶל הַאַחֲשְׁוֹרִינִים
וְהַפְּחוֹת וּשְׁלֵי הַמִּדְינּוֹת
אֲשֶׁר | מִהָּדוּ וְעַד-פְּזַשְׁׁ
שְׁבַע וּעַשְׁ�ִים זָמָה מִדְיָה
מִדְיָה וּמִדְיָה כְּכַתְבָּה
וְעַם וְעַם כְּלִשְׁנוֹ
וְאֶל-הַיּוֹדֵם
בְּכַתְבָּם וּכְלִשְׁנוֹם:
י. וַיִּכְתַּבְּ בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַמְשֻׁרֶשׁ
ニיחתּם בְּטַבְעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ
וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים
בְּיַד הַרְאַצִּים בְּטוּסִים
רְכָבֵי הַלְּכָשׁ הַאַחֲשְׁוֹרִינִים
בְּנֵי הַרְאַצִּים:
יא. אֲשֶׁר נִמְןָה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְיִהּוֹנִים |
אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-עִיר-זְעוּרָה
לְהַקְהֵל וּלְעִמּוֹד עַל-גְּפַשְׁתָּם
לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְגֵּז וּלְאֶפְדֵּד
אַתְּ-כָל-תְּלִיל
עַם וּמִדְיָה נְאָרוּם אַתְּ
טַר וּנְשִׁים

⁵⁰ "At that time," because that particular time was significant. More than two months elapsed after Haman's hanging, before Esther and Mordechai released their edict. They waited because any earlier release would have been viewed as a farce, as it totally reversed the anti-Jewish decree which had just been issued under the full legal authority of the king. "At that time," when they felt that it would be effective, Esther and Mordechai issued the new edict. (Or Chadash.)

⁵¹ The annihilation of their oppressors was in defense of their lives—otherwise, the oppressors would have annihilated them. (Yosef Lekach.)

with their booty to be taken.

12. On a single day,
in all the colonies of King Achashverosh—
on the thirteenth of the twelfth month,
which is the month of Adar.

13. The terms of the writ
would become legally binding
in each and every colony,
displayed conspicuously before all the peoples,
so that the Yehudim would be poised, on that day,
to exact vengeance on their enemies.

14. The couriers,
riders of the royal breed, the fleet dromedaries,
rushed away by urgent royal command,
and the decree was delivered
in the capital city of Shushan.

15. Mordechai emerged from the king's presence
attired in majestic garb⁵²
of bluish *techeiles* wool and pure white,
with a great golden crown,
and a cloak of linen and purple, *argaman* wool.

And the city of Shushan was blissfully joyful.

16. For the Yehudim,
there was radiance, joy, delight, and glory.

17. In each and every colony,
each and every city,
every place

where with the king's directive and bylaw reached,
there was joy and delight for the Jews,
festivity and days of celebration,

ושללים לובז:

יב. בָּרוּם אַחֲרֵי

בְּכָל־מִרְקָנוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרֹשׁ
בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה עַשֶּׂר לְחַדְשָׁ שָׁנִים־עַשֶּׂר
הוּא־חַנֵּשׁ אַדְרָה:

יג. פְּתַחְנָן הַכְּפָתָב

לְהַבְּחֹן דָת

בְּכָל־מִרְגָּנָה וּמִדְיָה

גָּלוּי לְכָל־הָעָמִים

וְלִיהְיוֹת הַיְהוּדִים עַתְּדִים לִיּוֹם הַהָּה
לְהַבְּגָם מַאיְבִּים:

יד. הַרְצִים

רַכְבֵּי הַרְכָּשׁ הַאַחֲשְׁוֹרִים

יִצְאֵו מִבְּהָלִים וּדְחוֹפִים בַּרְכָּר הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְהַקְּתָנָה

בְּשִׁוּשָׁן הַבִּירָה:

טו. וּמְרֹדְכַּי יֵצֵא | מַלְפְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

בְּלֹבִישׁ מֶלֶכְתָּ

תִּכְלָת וָחוֹד

וְעַטְרָה זָהָב גָּדוֹלָה

וּמְכֻרֵיךְ בָּזָן וְאַרְגָּמָן

וְהַעִיר שְׁוִישָׁן אַהֲלָה וְשְׁמַחָה:

טו. לִיהְוּדִים

הַיְמָה אֹורָה וְשְׁמַחָה וְשְׁלָשָׁן וִיקָּרָה:

יז. וּבְכָל־מִרְגָּנָה וּמִדְיָה

וּבְכָל־עִיר נְזִיר

מִקּוֹט

אֲשֶׁר דָּבָר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְרֹחֶן מְאַיעַץ

שְׁמַחָה וְשְׁלָשָׁן לִיהְיוּדִים

מִשְׁפָּתָה וְיֹום טָוב

⁵² Mordechai reigned as the monarch over the Jews of the kingdom. (Midrash, 10:12.)

with many among the people of the land
converting to Judaism,⁵³
as the awesomeness of the Yehudim had descended
over them.

וּרְבִים מַעֲשֵׂי הָאָרֶץ
מִתְהִלָּים
כִּינְפֵל פָּתָר־הַיּוֹדִים
עַלְיָהֶם:

Chapter 9

1. During the twelfth month,
which is the month of Adar,
on the thirteenth day of the month,
when the king's directive and bylaw
were to be put in effect;
on the very day when the enemies of the Yehudim
anticipated that they would subdue them—
it was totally reversed,⁵⁴
for they—the Yehudim—subdued their enemies.
2. The Yehudim assembled in their colonies
throughout all of King Achashverosh's colonies
to assault those who sought their harm,
and no man resisted them,
for their awesomeness had descended
over all the peoples.
3. All of the colonial ministers,
envoys, and governors,
and the imperial executive staff,
exalted the Yehudim,
as Mordechai's awesomeness had descended

א. נִבְשָׁגִים עַשֶּׂר חֶדֶשׁ הַיּוֹנָה אֶנְדָר
בְּשִׁלּוֹשָׁה עַשֶּׂר יוֹם בָּרוּךְ
אֲשֶׁר הָגַע דְּבָרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָחַז
לְהַעֲשָׂות
בַּיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר שָׁבָרְוּ אַזְבִּי הַיּוֹדִים
לְשֻׁלְׂטֹת בָּהָם
וּנְהַפּוֹךְ הוּא
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלֹטוּ הַיּוֹדִים הַמָּה בְּשָׁנָאָהֶם:
ב. נִקְהַלְוּ הַיּוֹדִים בְּעָרִים
בְּכָל־מִדְינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ
לִשְׁלָמָה יְד בְּמַבְקָשׁ רַעַם
וְאִישׁ לֹא־עָמַד בְּפָנָיהם
כִּינְפֵל פְּחָזָם
עַל־פְּלִדְתָּהָעָם:
ג. וּכְלִשְׂרֵל הַמִּדְינוֹת
וְהַאֲמַשְׁדְּרָפָנִים וְהַפְּחוֹת
וְעַשִּׂי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לְפָלָק
מְנַשְּׁאָם אֶת־הַיּוֹדִים
כִּינְפֵל פָּתָר מְרֹךְיִ

⁵³ Haman, like all Amalekites was a descendant of Eisav. His downfall, followed by widespread conversion to Judaism, foreshadowed the universal redemption envisioned by the prophet, "The redeemers shall ascend Mount Zion to pass judgement against Eisav, and the kingdom shall belong to God. (Ovadiah, v.21.)" (Or Chadash.)

⁵⁴ Indeed, all of Haman's nefarious activities were totally reversed—he was hung from the gallows which he had prepared for Mordechai, his castle and fortune were appropriated to the Jews, the imperial signet ring which Achashverosh had entrusted to him, as well as his very position as second to the king, were transferred to Mordechai. (Or Chadash. See Rashi to Bereishis, 25:23, "...will be mightier than the other government.")

over them.

4. For Mordechai was powerful at the royal palace, and his prestige extended throughout the colonies; for the distinguished Mordechai's greatness flourished.

5. The Yehudim struck all their enemies with rapier blows,⁵⁵ slaughter, and annihilation, doing as they pleased with their enemies.

6. In the capital city of Shushan, the Yehudim killed and annihilated five hundred men.⁵⁶

7. And Parshandasa, and Dalfon, and Aspasa.

8. And Porasa, and Adalia, and Aridasa.

9. And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vaizasa,

10. The ten⁵⁷ sons⁵⁸ of Haman, son of Hamdasa, oppressor of the Yehudim, they killed. But they did not lay their hands on the spoils.⁵⁹

עליהם:

ד. כי-גדול מרדכי בבית המלך ושמעו הולך כל-הארון

כי-האיש מרדכי הולך ונדרול:

ה. ויבז היהודים בכל-ארציהם מטבח-חרב והרג ואכזרן

ויעשו בשניהם פרצונים:

ו. ובושען הבירה הרגו היהודים ואבד

חטש מאות איש:

ז. ואות פרשנדייא ואות דלפין

ואות אספחא:

ח. ואות פורחא ואות אדריא

ואות ארידחא:

ט. ואות פרמישטא ואות אריפסי

ואות אריךוי ואות ניזחא:

ו. צלחת בני המן בזיהמדתא

צלר היהודים הרגו

ובבזה לא שלחו אחידם:

⁵⁵ The "rapier blows" inflicted grievous injury, but not immediate death. The "slaughter" caused immediate death, but the bodies remained intact for burial. The "annihilation" totally obliterated the enemies, so that burial was impossible. (Or Chadash.)

⁵⁶ Amalekites. (Targum.)

⁵⁷ At the reading of the Megillah on Purim, the ten names are cantillated in one breath, to indicate that they all died at the same instant (Megiallah, 16:b.) As they opposed the unity of God on earth, their deaths indicated that God's unity remained supreme. Thus, their deaths occurred in unison. (Or Chadash.)

⁵⁸ They were instrumental in maligning the Jews in the Holy land, so that they were denied permission to rebuild the Temple. (Rashi, from Seder Olam.)

⁵⁹ Esther's ancestor, King Shaul, had sinned by sparing the Amalekite King Agag, and by permitting the people to retain some of the Amalekite booty. (Shmuel I, ch.15.) His misdeed was now rectified through the killing of Agag's descendants, Haman and his children, and by the people's restraint in relinquishing the spoils.

י.א. בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא

בָּא מִסְפֵּר נֶהֱרוֹגִים

בְּשִׁשְׁעַנְתְּכִירָה

לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

י.ב. וְلֹא מָר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאִסְתַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ

בְּשִׁשְׁעַנְתְּכִירָה

הַרְגֵּן הַיְהוּדִים וְאֶבֶד

חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת אַיִשׁ

וְאֶת עִשְׂרָה בְּנֵי-הָמָן

בְּשַׁאֲרַ מִדְינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ

כְּהֵצָּעֵשׂ

וּמָה-שָׁאַלְתָּךְ וַיַּגְּתָּן לְךָ

וּמָה-בְּקַשְׁתָּךְ עֹז וְחוּשָׁךְ:

י.ג. וְתַאֲמַר אִסְתַּר

אָס-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טֻוב

יִתְعַנֵּן גַּם-מָהָר לַיְהוּדִים

אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁוּשָׁן

לְעַשׂוֹת כְּדוֹת הַיּוֹם

וְאֶת עִשְׂרָה בְּנֵי-הָמָן

יִתְלֻוּ עַל-הָעָזָזָן:

י.ד. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַעֲשׂוֹת פְּנֵי

וְתַגְּתַּן דָּת בְּשִׁוּשָׁן

וְאֶת עִשְׂרָה בְּנֵי-הָמָן תְּלִוֵּי:

טו. וַיַּקְרְבֵּן הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר-בְּשִׁוּשָׁן

גָּם בְּיֹום אַרְבָּעָה עִשָּׂר לְחֶדֶשׁ אֶדֶר

וַיַּהֲרֹג בְּשִׁוּשָׁן שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אַיִשׁ

בְּכֶבֶת לֹא שְׁלֹחַ אֶת-יִדָּם:

טו. וְשַׁאֲרַ הַיְהוּדִים

אֲשֶׁר בְּמִדְינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ

גַּקְהָלוּ וְעַמְּדָעַל-גַּפְשָׁם

וְנוֹתֵר מַאיִכְיָם

11. On that day,
the total of those killed
in the capital city of Shushan
came to the king's attention.

12. The king said to Queen Esther,
“In the capital city of Shushan,
the Yehudim killed and annihilated
five hundred men,
and Haman's ten sons,
so in the remaining territories of the king,
[imagine] what they have done.

Now, whatever you request shall be granted you,
whatever else you wish shall be fulfilled.”

13. Esther replied,
“If his majesty deems it proper,
then let tomorrow, too, be granted to the Yehudim
who are in Shushan,
to act in accordance with today's decree,
and let Haman's ten sons
be hung from a gallows.”

14. The king gave word for this to be done.
The decree was proclaimed in Shushan,
and Haman's ten sons were hung.

15. The Yehudim who were in Shushan assembled
also on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar,
and killed, in Shushan, three hundred men,⁶⁰
but they did not lay their hand on the spoils.

16. Now the remaining Yehudim
who were in the king's colonies
assembled and stood in defense of their lives,
bringing deliverance from their enemies

⁶⁰ Amalekites. (Targum.)

killing seventy-five thousand of their antagonists.⁶¹

But they did not lay their hands on the spoils.

17. [The victory was]

on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar,

while the deliverance was realized

on the fourteenth of the month,

making it a day of feasting and rejoicing.

18. Whereas the Yehudim who were in Shushan

assembled on the thirteenth

and on the fourteenth of the month,

and realized deliverance

on the fifteenth of the month,

making it a day of feasting and rejoicing.

19. For this reason, “unwalled” Yehudim—

those who reside in unwalled cities—

observe the fourteenth day

of the month of Adar

[as a day of] feasting, rejoicing,

and a day of celebration,

sending gifts of food to one another.⁶²

20. Mordechai wrote of these matters,⁶³

and dispatched scrolls to all the Yehudim

in all of King Achashverosh’s colonies,

those nearby and those distant.

21. Mandating that they resolve

to permanently observe

the fourteenth day of the month of Adar,

and the fifteenth day of the month,

וְהַרֹּוג בְּשָׁנָאִילָם חַמְשָׁה וְשְׁבָעִים אֶלְף
וּבְכֹה לֹא שְׁלֹחוּ אֲחִיכָם:

י. בַּיּוֹם-שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחַדֵּשׁ אֶדֶר
וּנוּחַ

בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ
וּשְׁעָה אֶתְוּ יּוֹם מִשְׁתָּחָה וְשְׁמַחָה:

יח. וְהַיּוֹנִים אֲשֶׁר-בְּשָׁוֶן
נִקְהָלוּ בְּשְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ
וּבְאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ

וּנוּחַ
בְּחַמְשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ
וּשְׁעָה אֶתְוּ יּוֹם מִשְׁתָּחָה וְשְׁמַחָה:

יט. עַל-כֵן נִיהוֹנִים הַפְּרוֹזִים
הַיְשִׁבְתִּים בְּעַרְיִ הַפְּרוֹזִים
עָשִׂים אֶת יּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר
לְחַדֵּשׁ אֶדֶר

שְׁמַחָה וְמִשְׁתָּחָה
וְיּוֹם טּוֹב

וּמְשֻׁלּוּחַ מְנוֹת אִישׁ לְרַעֲנָה:
כ. וַיַּכְתֵּב מְרְדָכַי אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הָאָלֶה
וַיִּשְׁלַח כְּפָרִים אֶל-כָּל-הַיּוֹדָם
אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מִדְינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁנָרוֹשׁ

פְּקוּדִים וְהַרְחָקִים:
כא. לְקִים עַל-הַמִּלְחָמָה
לְהִיוֹת עָשִׂים

אֶת יּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְחַדֵּשׁ אֶדֶר
וְאֶת יּוֹם-חַמְשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ

⁶¹ Amalekites. (Targum.)

⁶² The walled city dwellers, however, observe the fifteenth of the month, commemorating the day of deliverance of the walled city of Shushan. (Rashi. See Megillah, 2:a.)

⁶³ He wrote the Book of Esther. (Rashi.)

each and every year.

כל-שנה ושנה:

22. Corresponding with the days

כב. כיימים

when the Yehudim realized deliverance

אשר-זו בם היזרים

from their antagonists,

מאותים

and the month

ונחנץ

which had been transformed for them,

אשר נחנך להם

from one of anguish to rejoicing,

מייגן לשמחה

from grief to days of celebration;

ומאכל ליום טוב

to observe them as days of feasting and rejoicing,

לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה

sending gifts of food to one another,

ומשלחת מנות איש לרעהו

and gifts to the poor.

אליהם:

23. The Yehudim accepted, as binding,

כג. וקהל היזרים

the observances that they had begun,

את אשר-החולו לעשות

and those that Mordechai had mandated in his letter

וاثר אשר-צטב מרדכי

to them.

אליהם:

24. For Haman, the son of Hamdasa, the Agagite,

כד. כי המן צו-המלך האגאי

oppressor of all the Yehudim,

צור כל-היזרים

thought that he would annihilate the Yehudim.

חוּשֵׁב על-היזרים לאבדם

He cast a *pur*, meaning "lot,"

והפל פור הוא הגורל

to terrorize, then annihilate them.

להם ולאבדם:

25. But when she came before the king,

כה. ישבאת לפני המלך

he directed, in writing,

אמיר עס-המלך

that the evil scheme which he intended

ישוב מחשבתו הרעה

for the Yehudim rebound against his own head,

אשר-חשב על-היזרים על-ראשו

and they hung him and his sons from a gallows.

ותלו אותו ואת-פניו על-העץ:

26. For this reason,

כו. על-בן

these days are entitled *purim*,

קרואו לימים האלה פורים

because of the lottery.

על-שם הפור

[They are celebrated] for this reason—

על-בנין

because of all that is narrated in this letter.

על-כל-דברי האגדה הזאת

[This letter records]

ומה-ראוי על-פכה

why they saw fit to act in such a way,

ומה הצעיר אליהם:

and what happened to them as a result.

27. The Yehudim resolved—accepting⁶⁴ as binding—for themselves, their progeny, and anyone associated with them, never to be changed, that they would observe these two days, as written, and at the proper time each year.

28. These days shall be recalled and observed in every generation, by every family, in every colony and every city; and these Purim days

shall never pass from among the Yehudim, nor their memory depart from their descendants.

29. Queen Esther, daughter of Avichail, wrote together with Mordechai the Yehudi, with all the power [of their position] confirming this Purim letter a second time.⁶⁵

30. Scrolls were dispatched to all the Yehudim, to the one hundred and twenty-seven colonies of Achashveros's kingdom; words of peace and truth.

31. To maintain these Purim days at the proper time,

as was resolved and confirmed by Mordechai the Yehudi and Queen Esther, and as they had resolved for themselves and their descendants; [commemorating] the incidents of the fasts

כז. קיימו וקבעו היהודים עליהם וועל-ירעם ועל כל-ה沽נים עליהם ולא עברו להיות עשים אח-שנוי הימים האלה בכל-טבם וכזכורם בכל-שנה ושנה: כה. והימים האלה נוכרים ונעשהם בכל-דור ודור משפחחה ומשפחה מדינה ומדינה ועיר ועיר וייחי הפורים האלה לא יעברו מתיוך היהודים ונזכרם לא-יסוף מזרעם: כט. וזה כתוב אסתר הפלגה בת-אביתיל ומרdecki היהודי ואה'כל-תולמי לקום את-אגרת הפורים הזאת הפעם: ל. וישלח ספריים אל-כל-היהודים אל-שבע ועשרים ימאה מדינה מלכות אחושראש דברyi שלום ואמתה: לא. לקלים את-ימוי הפורים האלה בונמיים באשר קנים עליהם מרdecki היהורי ואסתר הפלגה ובאשר קיימו על-נפשם ועל-ירעם דברyi השומות

⁶⁴ The Rabbis remark that this infers, homiletically, that they now willingly resolved to observe the Torah which they were compelled to accept at Sinai. At Sinai, the mountain hovered over them, threatening to engulf them unless they accepted the Torah (Rashi to Shemos, 19:17.) Now, however, their willing acceptance of the additional Purim mitzvos indicated that they whole—heartedly accepted all of the Torah. (Shabbos, 88:a.)

⁶⁵ The following year, they again sent the letter mandating the observance of Purim. (Rashi.)

and their cries.

32. On the basis of Esther's request,
these Purim matters were perpetuated,
and inscribed in a scroll.⁶⁶

ונעקבותם:

ל.ב. ימאממר אַסְתֵּר
קָלִם דְּבָרִים נְגֻנִים הָאָלָה
וּנְכַתְּבָ בְּסִפְרָה:

Chapter 10

1. King Achashverosh levied a tax
on the land dwellers and the ocean islanders.

פרק י

א. וְשָׁלַט הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ | מִסְּ

עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְאַיִלְנִים:

2. All of his mighty, powerful deeds,
and the record of Mordechai's eminence
as granted him by the king;

ב. וְכָל־מְעָשָׂה תְּקִפוֹ וְגִבּוּרָתוֹ
וּפְרִישָׁת גְּדוּלָת מְרֻדְלִי

all of these are inscribed
in the book of archives
of the royalty of Media and Persia.

אֲשֶׁר גָּדוֹלָה הַמֶּלֶךְ

הַלּוֹא־הָתְמִימָה בְּחוּבִים
שְׁלִיחָה דְּבָרִי הַיָּמִים

לְמַלְכֵי מָןִי וּפְרָסָה:

3. For Mordechai the Yehudi
was second to King Achashverosh,
great among the Yehudim,
esteemed by most of his brethren;
he sought the welfare of his people,
and was the spokesman for the peace⁶⁷
of his descendants.

ג. כִּי | מְרֻדְלִי הַיְהוּדִי
מְשֻׁנָּה לְמֶלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ

וְגָדוֹלָה לְיְהוּדִים
וּרְצִיוֹן לְרַב אֲחִיו

דֶּרֶשׁ טֹוב לְעַמּוֹ
וְדִבְרָר שְׁלוּם

לְכָל־זָרָעָוָה:

She requested that the Book of Esther be canonized as part of the Sacred Scriptures, and the Rabbis agreed.
(from Megillah, 7:a)
Great Torah sages bring the world tranquility. (Midrash.)

Dedicated in memory of

אסתר בת ר' אשר זוליג ע"ה—
זאב בן ר' דוד צבי ע"ה—
Zev Gluck—

דוד צבי בן ר' זאב ע"ה—
אשר זוליג בן ר' זאב ע"ה—
George Gluck—
מנשה בן זאב ע"ה—
Emanuel M. Gluck—
שמואל בן ר' זאב ע"ה—
Samuel C. Gluck—
Henry Gluck—
חוֹקָל שְׁרָגָן בֶּן ר' זאב ע"ה—
לייבע בת ר' זאב ע"ה—
Lee Gluck—

יעקב יצחק בן ר' זאב ע"ה—
Dr. Jack I. Saks—

מיימי בת ר' זאב ע"ה—
Mae G. Saks—

חייאל בן ר' משה ע"ה—
Elie Neustadter—

by
The Saks Family